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The Week

AFTER long holding to his power by a thread, Alfonso of Spain has been forced to abdicate by the popular emotion following the registering of an overwhelming republican majority in the first municipal elections in eight years. The nobility and the established church may be the next to lose their privileges. What the full outcome of the overwhelming defeat of the Monarchy may be is not easy to say. The Republican-Socialist program proposes the immediate distribution of landed estates—perhaps with some sort of compensation if there is no obdurate resistance. It also proposes to strike at great monopolistic enterprises. The first to suffer may be the International Telephone and Telegraph Company, which recently was exposed to withering assaults from radical and republican ranks. Then there is the question of the "$60,000,000 Morgan Loan," as the recent credit opened in London, Paris and New York to stabilize the peseta is called in Spain; it will be declared void if the republicans have their way. Catalonia will realize her long ambition for autonomy, if not for complete independence. If the nobility and the handful of generals who have resisted change so long attempt to upset the new regime, the result will probably be civil war as a prelude to a dictatorship of the proletariat. Communism has made much headway in Catalonia—the most advanced industrial center of Spain—and in Andalusia, where there is much suffering due to a bad system and poor crops. Troztky has predicted that Spain would be the "next."

IN HIS address to the Red Cross, President Hoover again expresses his preference for private doles over government doles. He is thinking, of course, not of the welfare of the recipients, but of the satisfaction of the givers. "Voluntary service" is to him an end in itself, so high an end that in order to prevent any substitution for it of relief from the federal treasury he was willing to gamble with the chance that women and children in the drought-stricken regions might starve—if not to immediate death, at least to the extent of tuberculosis, rickets and scurvy. He talks glibly about the Red Cross (under his guidance) having preserved the "spiritual responses of the American people." He says that "a voluntary deed by a man impressed with the sense of responsibility and brotherhood of man is infinitely more precious to our national ideals and national spirit than a thousandfold poured from the treasury of the government under the compulsion of law." It is only too clear that he thinks organized society as represented by its government ought not to be impressed with the sense of responsibility and brotherhood of man. All it should do is to keep the way clear for the voluntary action which pursues private profits, regardless of the chaos which such individualism causes. Or perhaps, to be entirely logical, he welcomes the social disaster which results, because it gives still more opportunity for the "spiritual responses" of charity which he values so highly.

IN SPITE of the lowest price for wheat in many years, the government estimates that the winter-wheat crop will be bigger than ever. A larger acreage was planted, and weather conditions have been favorable for a good yield. Thus our good old "law of supply and demand," which is by its

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more uncritical adherents supposed to work so well under competitive private enterprise, once more comes a cropper as a regulating force. When prices are low farmers often do not plant less; they may plant more because they have to sell more in order to make ends meet at the lower price. Voluntary restriction of acreage in the hope of higher prices does not work; the goal is too remote and uncertain; each farmer is afraid others will not restrict. More productive methods continue their tendency to enlarge output. The only force which really restricts acreage is that which slowly and painfully drives farmers off the land altogether. Who can praise our system of agriculture when this is its result? We are horrified at the Kulaks dispossessed by the Russian dictatorship; but we ignore the fact that under our regime hundreds of thousands of farmers are dispossessed by the dictatorship of planlessness.

THEODORE DREISER intends to be the Moses who will lead the authors out of the Hollywood wilderness. He has announced his intention of suing the Paramount company to restrain them from showing the film version of "An American Tragedy," which he says is so bad that it will do great damage to his artistic reputation. We have not seen the movie made from Mr. Dreiser's book, and will not venture to predict the outcome of his suit, in case he ever brings it into court; but even if he wins, we do not believe that it will have any important effect on the relation between authors and producers for the screen. The plain fact is that most authors are more concerned about the money they get from the movies than about the possible damage to their reputation from the cheapening of their stories for eight-year-old minds. There is no law compelling them to deal with Hollywood if they don't want to. Certainly the great majority of them must have heard of conditions among the movie producers, before signing their contracts, and must go in with their eyes open.

THE real hope for the movies, as has often been said, lies in producing for special audiences. At present, the situation is analogous to that which would exist if every novelist and short-story writer had to fit his work to appear in a tabloid newspaper. This situation has been improved since the advent of the talkies, a few of which reach heights of adult sophistication hitherto impossible on the screen; but it will be remedied even more when special films are produced to be shown to special audiences, just as books are now printed when the publishers know in advance that they can be sold only to a few thousand people. The cost of making a movie has been so great in the past that only widespread exhibition could make it profitable; at the same time, large profits have caused the producers to be outrageously wasteful and extravagant. As technical methods improve, and as the bankers who are now taking control of Hollywood begin to examine cost sheets with a more thrifty eye, there is no reason why intelligent pictures for intelligent audiences should not become commercially feasible. Then, and only then, will Mr. Dreiser's crusade have any hope of success.

WE HAVE heard of people achieving triumphs of publicity by jumping off high bridges, or sitting on flagpoles, or rolling peanuts up Pike's Peak with their noses. But it seems to us that the two Communists who were recently kidnapped by a group of men in Dallas, Texas, flogged senseless and then left for dead on a deserted country road, deserve the publicity prize for all time. For we now learn to our considerable astonishment that the whole affair was organized and engineered by the victims themselves. The county grand jury which has been investigating the case has discovered that the two Communists, Hurst and Coder, "were kidnapped by themselves or other Communists for publicity purposes." It is not particularly difficult to understand how the members of the grand jury arrived at this ingenious theory when one learns that they ignored the sworn testimony of a witness. However, the idea has all sorts of possibilities. In the near future, perhaps, we shall also be told that the four Negroes lynched in Texas last year also got themselves kidnapped and murdered "for publicity purposes."

AS LONG as Joe Strozzi's place was poorly patronized, he had only the friendliest relations with the police. An occasional sawbuck to the copper on the beat, fifty dollars to the lieutenant at Christmas time—this was the extent of the informal tax he paid to the city authorities. As for the federal agents, they had no time to bother with a back-room speakeasy and restaurant in the Chelsea district of New York, when there were so many richer sources of tribute. French stewards from the boats stood drinking uncut cognac at the bar; French chefs on their day of leisure came bearing choice cuts of beef, which they cooked on the huge black range in the kitchen; life in Joe's place went on peacefully, as it had done for the last ten years. Trouble came first when the restaurant was discovered by artists. They gathered in droves, bringing their friends the writers, and the writers' friends from the daily papers, and the reporters' friends from the fringes of Greenwich Village, and finally the observant police, who, seeing that Joe was prosperous, now levied their tax every Saturday night instead of once or twice a year. The federal agents also appeared, in their more sinister fashion. Joe bought them off more than once, but finally they made two unexpected raids, and a padlock order was handed down by the federal district court.

AT THIS point the story, hitherto commonplace, becomes a curious commentary on the fashion in which prohibition is enforced in New York City. The federal agents intimated that there was no real

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need to padlock the whole restaurant. For a consideration, they would padlock only the bar, after moving it into a corner of the room; then business could go on as usual. The charge would be $5,000—a mere item of overhead to a man as popular as Joe was with his patrons. Joe paid the $5,000; he engaged carpenters to move his bar and build a partition round it; the artists and writers stood jeering in a circle while the padlock was duly affixed. Cognac was raised in price from fifty to sixty cents a glass; business continued to flourish, but Joe was fearful. His fears were justified. One day late in March, a month after the new bar was built, two federal men appeared, marched grimly to the enclosure round the bar, removed the padlock and fastened it to the front door, this time effectively closing the restaurant. Joe took his post on the sidewalk, to break the news to his patrons. As the artists and writers, the French chefs and stewards, condoled with him, he shook his head with an air of disbelief in mankind. 'For ten years I work," he said, "and now what? There is honor among thieves, yes, but among federal agents, no."

ARE the movies to go the way of the radio (in America) and devote themselves to the exploitation of commercial products? That question is now agitating the industry. Within recent months a few advertising films have been shown in the theatres—most of them mildly amusing "shorts" which have nothing to do with the product by whose manufacturer they are "sponsored." It might be supposed that the patrons of the movies, having paid admission, would object to this blatant abuse of their confidence; but seemingly they do not. According to reports in the trade press, those comments which have been made to the managers of theatres showing these advertising films have ranged from 90 to 99-percent favorable. Probably the best hope of combatting the menace of advertising in the movies lies in the opposition of the daily press. The newspapers have seen the radio grow into a dangerous competitor for the advertisers' dollar; and they are not likely to be caught napping again. The movies are extremely sensitive to criticism in the press, and the papers can, if they will, raise such a hue and cry that Will Hays will wave his magic wand and wipe the advertising film from the screen.

Old Europe and the New Crisis

SIX MONTHS ago, it was the fashion to say that the general European situation was "depressing." Then came the election in Germany, with the sharp increase in the vote of the Communists and ultra-Nationalists, and commentators agreed that the political temperature of the Continent had risen by many degrees. A short time later it was announced that France and Italy had settled their differences in regard to naval building programs and were prepared to sign a treaty supplementary to the London Naval Pact, and at once the newspaper correspondents decided that the tension was greatly slackened. Today we are again told that the European outlook is worse than at any time since the end of the War, or at least, since the occupation of the Ruhr. What lies behind these fluctuations in the fever chart? Have they any reality? Or are they simply a product of the journalists' desire to alarm their readers from time to time, and thus keep the news hot?

It is true that, as a great American university president recently remarked, the press suffers from too much "day-to-dayness"; journalism relies for much of its excitement on the blessedly short memory of the reader. At the same time, the reported alterations in the European status have actually taken place, and they are important in the extreme. The whole Continent is sitting on a powder mine quite as truly as it was in 1914; and the fact that the mine has not yet exploded is no guarantee that it will not. It is a tragic and ironic fact that when a crisis occurs, we hear almost nothing, except in formal communiqués, about the elaborate machinery set up during the past decade for the maintenance of peace—the League, the World Court, Locarno, the Kellogg treaties and all the rest of it. Diplomats, journalists and other observers all assume that the fundamental realities of the situation are still economic and military; and they are right.

At the present moment, the two chief items of bad news for Europe are the reaction in some quarters to the proposed Austro-German customs union, and the newly revealed disagreement between France and Germany regarding naval tonnage. The customs union, as The New Republic has already pointed out, is a project which, in itself, cannot be criticized. A reciprocal lowering of tariffs between countries in Europe is certainly sound economics, and it becomes sounder as the number of countries participating is increased. Germany and Austria announced at the beginning that their agreement was open to any and every other power; that in fact they hoped this would be only the inauguration of a pan-European enterprise. Since the French have for years taken the lead in advocating a "United States of Europe," they are now hard put to it to explain the anger and alarm with which they have received the news. The truth is, of course, that the French do not wish to see any development which augments the power and influence of their late enemies, or threatens, however remotely, their own hegemony over the Continent.

Some commentators believe, indeed, that the objection which has suddenly developed in France to the naval agreement with Italy is not unrelated to the proposed customs union. France needs all possible influence in the pending discussions over the Austro-German proposal; and most of all she needs the support of Great Britain. The oldest

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rule of diplomacy is: assemble all possible bargaining power at the beginning of an important negotiation. It may be that a sudden hitch in the arrangement with Italy is the best card which could be created in a hurry to play against the British desire to be neutral or perhaps even to take Germany's side.

Another disturbing factor in the European situation is, as has so long been the case, the foreign policy of Soviet Russia. The Russians themselves live in continual dread of an attack by "the imperialist-capitalist nations" of western Europe. Because of this fear, they divert badly needed men and money into the creation of a great military machine. Western Europe, on the other hand, now has a new Russian bogey which is not less important because so largely unjustified: the fear that exports from the U. S. S. R. will be dumped upon world markets to the detriment, perhaps even the destruction, of their own industry. They are already responding with embargoes similar to those of the United States and Canada; and these embargoes in turn heighten the ill will which was bad enough before.

The sudden new difficulties in Europe have a direct and most important significance for the United States. Under the auspices of the League, a world conference on limitation of armament is to be held in 1932, and Washington officials attach the greatest importance to it. When the Franco-Italian naval difficulties seemed to be settled a few weeks ago, we were told that this was a development of the greatest significance because it rounded out the provisions of the three-power treaty of London. If France and Italy continue at loggerheads, the prospect of failure in the League conference next year becomes proportionately greater; and any realistic view must tell us that these chances were already quite great enough. The one lesson which we have learned from the successive attempts to reduce armament in recent years is that the nations are not yet prepared to do anything of importance in that direction. This is not to belittle such achievements as the Washington Conference of 1921 and the London pact. By putting an end to the competitive waste in armament, they altered international psychology for the better, and saved vast sums to the taxpayers of the various powers, some of which were headed straight for bankruptcy and some of which, for that matter, had already arrived there. But limitation of armament, as we now see it, has nothing in the world to do with disarmament. It has almost nothing to do with lessening the likelihood of war.

The fundamental factor in the whole European situation is the injustices created by the treaties of 1919. In those treaties, France sought, with the connivance of her allies, to crush Germany and the other Central Powers and to put herself in an artificial, unwarranted and unjust position of dominance over Europe. She has simply continued the War under another guise. It is natural enough, in such circumstances, that she should refuse to accept any real reduction of armament for herself or her allies. She fears—and quite justly—that the deep, smoldering sense of injustice among the mass of the German people might find violent expression in the attempt to rectify by force the wrongs done at the close of the War.

If the League's conference on limitation of armament is a failure or no more of a success than was the London Naval Conference, the consequences may be serious in the extreme. Year after year, the Germans were told that they ought to join the League, make every effort to meet the reparations and other obligations imposed upon them and follow a course of reconciliation and friendship. No unprejudiced observer can deny that the Germans have sought to do this, or that they have received little recognition of their efforts from their old enemy across the Rhine. The rise of the Hitlerites is a sufficient warning that as things are now going they will soon abandon their policy of conciliation. It is by no means impossible that a failure of the League conference next year might be followed by Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. It is equally possible that Italy would then manifest her hostility to France in the same manner, and we should see Europe again openly divided into two armed camps, with every likelihood that Russia for her own purposes might become a member of the Italo-German group.

It is still not too late for Europe to escape the shadow of another conflict; but there is no hope of this unless fair deeds take the place of fair words. The attitude of France is the key to the whole situation. Is she prepared to bring peace in the only possible way, by abandoning for the first time and whole-heartedly the policy of a fictitious security maintained by force alone? The next few months will tell the story.

Chicago Swaps Bosses

AS ALL the world—and the British Isles in particular—now knows, Big Bill Thompson is no longer mayor of Chicago. He was defeated in the municipal election by Anton J. Cermak, with the stunning majority of 194,000. Mr. Cermak is already in office, is dismissing Thompson appointees wholesale and is replacing them by loyal Democrats with a high-handedness which must make even Tammany jealous. The questions which for persons outside Chicago remain unanswered are: Why did Big Bill fall? And is there any reasonable hope that the alliance between government and gangsters, which has been the outstanding fact about Chicago for many years, will now come to an end?

Was Thompson betrayed by his own party? The fact that the only Republican candidate elected was James A. Kearns, as City Treasurer, suggests that

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the Deneen faction, of which Kearns was the sole representative on the ticket, traded votes in his behalf at Thompson's expense. This was not necessary for Cermak's election, however, which was due partly to the collapse of Thompson's organization, partly to a non-partisan movement of citizens determined to put an end to a regime at City Hall which was making Chicago the clown among cities of the world.

Chicago is a highly personal city. It recognizes generously what it owes of distinction to leading spirits, McCormick, Field, Pullman, Harper and Jane Addams. It is correspondingly at the mercy of individuals whose notoriety makes it ridiculous, such as S. E. Gross, who persuaded Judge Kohlsaat that he was the author of Cyrano de Bergerac, or Glenn W. Voliva, who has personally shown himself that the earth is flat. Of all its citizens who have contributed to the humorous contempt in which Chicago is undeservedly held, Thompson is probably the worst offender. He has degraded politics to a vaudeville show, and carried demagoguery to a point where it passes beyond every canon of plausibility and control. To "smack King George on the snoot" is an ideal which cannot be tested; and libelous statements inferring syphilis and homosexual practices against Chicago opponents cannot be discussed in court. If anyone imagines that Chicago is a city given over to lawlessness and violence, the personal safety which Mayor Thompson has enjoyed for twenty years should be a sufficient answer.

The consternation of "good citizens" was equaled by that of his own supporters when Thompson announced last winter that he proposed to run again for office, to serve the city in its world's-fair year of 1933. He was probably impelled by two circumstances. Some time previously The Chicago Tribune had won a taxpayer's suit against Thompson and several of his aids, for $1,700,000 in fees paid to so-called real-estate experts. It is generally believed that this hold enabled the paper to put pressure on Thompson to keep away from City Hall, and to shut up. When the Supreme Court reversed the verdict, Thompson was free to take the field against Ruth Hanna McCormick, sister-in-law of The Tribune, and did so with a review of the physical, mental and moral characteristics of the family connection which has owned and directed the paper since the days of Joseph Medill. The great majority by which J. Hamilton Lewis defeated "the lady," Thompson doubtless attributed in part to his intervention. His loss of party regularity was, however, to cost him dear. In the primaries nearly all his old allies deserted him, and got behind the Tribune candidate, Judge Lyle, who ran on a boastful claim of his severity in dealing with crime, but who was pronounced by his associates a greater menace to law and order than the gangsters against whom he fulminated. Senator Deneen had an opportunity to put forward a candidate representing ability and disinterestedness, such as Professor Charles E. Merriam; but he hoped to obtain the nomination for his own faction, until Lyle's candidacy forced him to enter one of his party henchmen, who ran a bad third.

The political power in Chicago is in the last analysis administered by 11,000 precinct captains, usually three to a precinct, representing the Democrats and the two Republican factions. It was remarkable how rapidly Thompson was able to replace defections and restore his lines in wards supposed to be controlled by the district leaders who had deserted him—Harding, Barrett, Brundage and Snow. His victory in the primary was due both to his revamped organization and to the general distrust entertained for Lyle and his supporters. Although the straw votes showed an increasing majority for Cermak, belief in the Thompson organization and his personal vote-getting power gave the contest an aspect of doubt until the ballots finally fell.

The successful candidate, Anton J. Cermak, is a representative of the immense Czech population on the West Side. He has come up, like Al Smith, from small business interests to be a power in politics. He has been president of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County for the last six years. His administration is not held impeccable. Certainly the erection of the Criminal Court Building out in the prairie on Twenty-second Street looks like a barefaced "job." Coming into office, however, with the support of civic purists, and under the necessity of keeping in the good graces of bankers in order to steer the city through the financial dislocation attendant upon the change in assessment values, it may be hoped that he will be able to control the hungry hordes behind him. Cermak is a Wet, the former president of the United Societies, the chief stronghold of the old saloon interests. Thus, the open town will be safe for the World's Fair.

One unfortunate incident of the campaign, which has been largely ignored by the press, was the removal from the official ballot of minor parties, including the Socialists and Communists. After the election-commissioners, apparently as a move to favor the Democrats, had ruled out these parties, a writ of mandamus was sought from Judge Thomas Taylor. The Judge peremptorily refused to grant this in the case of the Communist party, for reasons which emerge from considerable bubble and froth in the following sentence: "It is my judgment that anyone who announced himself as a Communist or a member of the Communist party, believing by that that he does not agree with the law of this state, as regards property rights, for example—the moment he undertakes to inject himself into the government as part of that government, where he will have to commit overt acts—for example, if he were a mayor—his action in endeavoring to go on the ballot is inimical to the government and is a menace to the government, and is illegal." Obviously the same reasoning would exclude from the ballot a candidate who disbelieved in the prohibition

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law. In the case of the Socialist party, the same Daniel come to judgment found, according to reports in the press, that its candidates had been arbitrarily held against by the Board of Election Commissioners, and were entitled to a writ of mandamus upon the merits of their case. Later he ruled that "public convenience," i. e., the expense involved, was of more importance than "the fanciful rights of liberty." Obviously again, if public convenience is to be measured by economy, this ruling would look toward printing no names whatever on the ballot. It may be that the most memorable event in connection with the recent municipal election in Chicago is not the transfer of the City Hall to the County Democracy, but Judge Taylor's decision and the evidence it bears of the arrogance and contempt with which upholders of the present political system regard those who by legal means are seeking to change it.

The Vice Squad Walks the Streets

FOR MORE than twenty years, the vice squad in New York City has been a scandal to those who knew its inside story. For six months it has been a scandal to the nation and the world at large. Now at last the commissioner of police has taken action. The reforms he has introduced are excellent; they are a radical change from the old procedure; but no one can read the list of them without wondering why they ever had to be made.

"In connection with arrests for vice," says Commissioner Mulrooney's order, "the employment of an informant is prohibited."—An informant in vice cases is a stool pigeon like Chile Acuna or Louie the Dove. Why were such men ever employed?

"A member of the force assigned to duty in plain clothes," so the order continues, "shall personally obtain evidence of violations of law relating to vice by direct means, and not through the medium of the 'unknown man'."—The "unknown man" was almost always a man known to members of the vice squad, and paid by them to entrap girls into situations that justified their arrest. Wasn't it obvious from the beginning that the use of such *agents provocateurs* created a vested interest in vice and perjury?

"The provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which define the circumstances under which a peace officer may break and enter for the purpose of arrest or otherwise, will be strictly observed."—Why were they ever disregarded?

"When a report or complaint is received from any source alleging a violation of law relating to vice, before plain-clothes men are assigned to obtain legal evidence for the purpose of making an arrest, the division commander concerned shall cause a preliminary investigation to be made through discreet inquiry in the neighborhood to ascertain whether or not there are reasonable grounds to believe that the violation reported actually exists."—But why were jump raids ever made without such discreet inquiries? Couldn't anyone have seen that this would encourage spiteful people to use the vice laws as a means of personal revenge?

It is hardly necessary to continue in the same fashion through the rest of Commissioner Mulrooney's order, showing the obviousness of each reform and the folly of waiting twenty years to make it. The fact of the matter is that the most repulsive feature of the long campaign against prostitution in New York City was not the violations of law revealed by the investigation. It was not the brutality of vice-squad men, or the cupidity of lawyers, or the venality of magistrates. Rather it was the perfectly legal system under which the vice squad fattened on vice—under which girls were seduced so they could be sent to jail—under which apartments were raided to oblige malicious neighbors—under which a policeman was judged by the number of girls he arrested (guilty or innocent, it did not matter) and a magistrate was praised for his high percentage of convictions.

Commissioner Mulrooney's reforms, if they continue to be observed, should remove the worst features of this system. Fortunately, they will be enforced by an entirely new body of men. The magistrates who sat in Women's Court have already been transferred to other tasks. A new vice squad is now being selected. The 300 men who formerly composed the squad are losing their pearl-gray spats, their fedoras, their swagger sticks, their snappy roadsters in which they once cruised from Harlem to Greenwich Village looking for pretty girls to flirt with and arrest. They are being sent back to the uniformed force, where they belong—those of them, at least, who don't belong in jail. Considering what their conduct is shown to have been, their punishment seems mild, but it has a certain poetic justice. The men who lived by preying on street walkers have been set, thank God! to walking the streets.

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A Bad Day in Brooklyn

On Wednesday, March 25, in Brooklyn, three people tried to kill themselves.

THE BAY RIDGE section of Brooklyn is inhabited chiefly by Scandinavians. Fifth Avenue near Leiv Eriksson Square is an infinitely continuing suburban business street of drug stores, small department stores, five-and-ten-cent stores and phonograph and radio stores run by people whose names end in -sen: a good many of them have cut-rate prices in the windows. The people on the streets are nothing if not respectable and they are not in too much of a hurry: tall blond Scandinavian men and girls and fat Scandinavian children. The Scandinavians get Americanized with a rapidity that is nobody's business. Around the corner, the side streets have rows of little ugly brownstone houses, each with two stories of polygonal bay-window sticking out, which go down a hill toward the water, all alike like steps.

Otto Reich lives in a four-story building above a Beauty Shoppe, where the bright Scandinavian girl says that he has nothing to do with them and they don't know anything about it. The narrow stairs have green linoleum, a glue-yellow, sticky-looking dado and a dispiriting backhouse smell.

Otto Reich is nineteen years old: he is a blond German boy with blue eyes, light hair smoothly slicked back, bumpkin nose, fleshy red mouth and recessive chin. He was born in Berlin and trained to be a waiter—he used to work in the big Hotel Eden. But he wanted to see other places and he wanted to get away from his family, with whom he had always lived. So a year ago he borrowed money from his brother-in-law and came to the States. He wanted to be alone and independent.

But when he first arrived in New York, the hard times had already set in and he couldn't get a waiter's job. For eight or nine months he worked as a bus-boy in various restaurants, hotels and clubs. A bus-boy works ten or twelve hours with an hour off in the afternoon; his pay is about $40 a month, with practically no tips. Finally, Otto got a job at the St. Martin waiting on the hotel officials. He asked to be put on room service, and when there was a vacancy, they had him fill it. He got $38 a month and about $12 a week in tips. Eating at the hotel, he was able to save almost the whole of his wages and was gradually paying back his brother-in-law in Germany who had lent him the money to come over.

Since the depression the New York hotels have made a wage cut of 10 percent and a general reduction of their staffs. When there is an increase of business over a holiday or week-end, they make the room-service men help out after hours in the restaurant with no extra pay, but only tips. One Saturday night at the St. Martin, when Otto had been there four months, they told him to go to the restaurant. He was already working from seven in the morning tili nine o'clock at night, which meant that, living in Bay Ridge, he had to get up at five-thirty in the morning and didn't get home until after ten. If he worked in the restaurant, too, he wouldn't get home till after one and would have only four hours of sleep. In Germany everywhere you worked only eight hours a day: the unions had fought it out with the hotels. At the Eden, he had worked from six to three and then he had had his time to himself.

Besides, he didn't get along with the head waiter in the St. Martin restaurant—he had already worked under him when he was waiting on the officials. The head waiter was an Italian and Otto had a low opinion of Italian waiters. The German and French waiters were the only waiters who understood "service." He had been trained to give service in Germany in one of the best hotels—service means wiping the knives and forks and polishing the plates before they are set down on the table, taking the cover off the dish and showing it to the guest, and a great many other useful acts and ceremonies—he had been thoroughly instructed in all this and knew exactly how these things ought to be done. But Italian waiters are uneducated imbeciles and they are not clean—that is why even smart American hotels like the St. Martin that want to have service can't get it. This particular Italian head waiter used always to be coming up behind him and gabbling at him. He would keep telling Otto to do things differently, but the head waiter was foolish—really he was foolish. He used to bawl Otto out in front of the people he was waiting on and Otto always did what the Italian told him, but the Italian was wrong—always wrong. Tonight he felt he couldn't face it, he was too much nervous already—so he told them he was only hired to work from seven to nine and took the subway home to Bay Ridge. The next morning when he came to work, he found his time-card gone and on inquiry found that he was fired.

That was February 16. Every morning after that, he went to the Geneva Association, the international waiters' organization, and every morning he found the same men there, waiting like him for jobs. There are three or four waiters to every job at the present time in New York, and Otto presently got so discouraged that he began applying at bakeries and factories, but things there were just as bad. The worst of it was that when he had lost his job, he had only half paid his brother-in-law back. He had given him a note to pay him back in a year and now the year was nearly over.

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Every night he would go back to his room and brood. He had no friends that he cared about in New York, so he had gone to live in Bay Ridge soon after he had come over, to be near a German couple who were the only people he liked. The wife had been a schoolmate of his sister's and she had sent him her address. He had taken a room on the same floor at $5 a week and had furnished it in such style as he could afford. He bought a lavender sateen spread for the bed and lavender sateen cushions for the sofa and a cheap imitation tapestry for the mantelpiece; and he decorated the wall with pennants of Bear Mountain, Palisade Park, Long Beach and the Statue of Liberty. He kept a bottle of perfume exactly in the center of his dressing-table and on the wall on either side of it hung a pair of boxing-gloves. He had always boxed regularly in Germany, and though he hadn't been able to much since he had come to the States, he did boxing exercises every morning at five-thirty when he first got up. He never turned the heat on in winter and always slept cold with all the windows open, as he believed that cold was good for the health. At the time he was working, he never went out dancing, but went to the movies once a week, on his night off.

The German woman's husband, who was a coppersmith, was out of work, too—he was lucky if he was able to put in a few days occasionally at the dry dock. He had gotten to coming home and brooding, too, and he had finally resorted to buying a radio so as to make things a little bit gay in the evenings. The German couple were very kind to him and he trusted them. He would go in every night and talk to them and play with the kid and listen to the radio. They had told all about themselves to each other by this time and they were pretty well talked out: every time any of them got a letter from Germany, that was an event—it gave them something new to talk about. They didn't know any of the Scandinavians.

But Otto was afraid to write home. He couldn't bear to let his parents know how badly he was doing in America. He was the only son and they counted on him. And they were poor and if they knew he was out of work, they would want to send him money. Also, he couldn't bring himself to tell his brother-in-law that he couldn't pay him back. One day in March he got a letter from his mother saying that his father was seriously sick.

He went on looking for a job—he would have taken any kind of a job—until he had only $4 left. He had been depending lately on the German family for meals. One night he went out for a walk about eight and the next thing he knew he was in his room sitting up on the bed with his clothes off. His German friend was sitting beside him and there was a man who had been working over him with a pulmotor. It seemed that there was an ambulance outside and that he had tried to commit suicide. A man from upstairs had come down and found him lying unconscious in the hall and the hall full of gas. He had evidently turned on the gas and then, when he was nearly asphyxiated, broken out of the room.

He couldn't remember anything about it. He couldn't even remember ever having thought of suicide. He thought he must have gone crazy for a while. And he couldn't sleep all the rest of the night after they left him, blaming himself and worrying over having done such a thing.

II

The Brownsville section of Brooklyn is mostly Jewish. Only fifteen years ago, it was all country and there was nothing but little farms there, but it was built up on a real-estate boom and today it is a paradise of brick—all fairly low buildings and mostly very clean and neat, not an unattractive place to live. There are light-brown brick apartment houses, streets of double brick houses whose monotony has been carefully mitigated by making the brick different tints of orange, yellow and red and the woodwork, say, on one side green and on the other side yellow, apartment houses in red-brick cliffs wired with identical green fire-escapes but with an effect of distinctiveness carefully provided by making the façades rise to slightly unconventional curves at the top, little special gingerbread-brick mansions with little brick and iron-grille walls around their front yards and the signs of Jewish doctors and blue *fleurs-de-lys* of stained glass in the narrow front windows, shabbier duocellular brick houses all with green woodwork on red brick and each with a clothes-pole mast leaning askew at the summit of its front, and on Livonia Avenue under the El, dingier brick.

Irma Meyer lives under the El in the first of a small solid row of tarnished pink brick houses. Her parents are Polish Jews. When she was sixteen she married a truck driver and she has had two children by him. She is twenty-one now. She has a cunning rather little-girl-like face, with skin extremely dark, slanting eyes and un-Jewish snub nose.

Jake Meyer turned out to be a loafer and his sister, who was well off, had to carry them. Jake's sister was married to a custom tailor who was in business for himself, and she sent her sons to Duke University and had two big white Russian wolfhounds. She helped Irma out with money regularly —Irma and her husband hadn't spent $10 on the children since they were born—and once Jake's sister had taken the whole family in for two weeks when Jake wasn't working.

But Jake didn't want to work. He had a little dinky $75 truck and he was supposed to deliver orange drink in it and get so much a case on commission, but some days he wouldn't show up and they finally fired him. Irma went to his boss and pled with him and told him about the children and they consented to take him back. But then she found he was going with other women and was driving them around in the truck. The first part of

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March Jake disappeared and left her without any money. The husband of Jake's sister, in the meantime, had gone bankrupt on account of the depression and now had to work for somebody else: the family had had to sell all the nice things they had bought when they were rich, and they couldn't give Irma any more help. It was all they could do to pay for their sons at Duke. The only things they kept were the Russian wolfhounds. Irma couldn't go to work because she didn't have anybody to take care of the children. She couldn't put them in a nursery because the nurseries were closed on Saturdays, whereas any place you worked always did business on Saturday. She couldn't take them and go to live with her parents either, because her brother wouldn't let her. Her father was a presser and since the slump had been making almost nothing: the pressers had been harder hit than anybody, because the only time people got their clothes pressed now was just before the holidays, and he had only two seasons a year of about two weeks each. Her brother, who was doing better, had come to the rescue of their mother and father, and he said that he hadn't taken his mother out of that cold flat and put her in C and D4 of a fine new apartment house to have her made a housemaid of.

Irma was behind with two months' rent, $32 a month, and she owed all the tradesmen money. She wasn't paid up on the bedroom set and expected to have it taken away any day. For food, she had to go to the police station, where once a week they gave her potatoes and onions and canned goods. The children were too young for this food and needed milk, but they told her at the police station that she could feed them on cabbage. She also appealed to the Jewish Aid Society and they recommended her case to the Mayor's Committee, who gave her $15. Finally, she got a dispossess notice.

After two weeks Jake turned up again. Irma got a warrant against him for abandonment and had him up in court, where the judge sentenced him to pay her $15 a week. Afterwards he followed her home and she got a cop in to kick him out, but the cop said he had a right to stay there. So he came home at night and flopped on the couch. He gave her a little money, but he wasn't doing very well and by the time he'd paid for gas and oil and the garage expenses he only had a few dollars left. The bills kept piling up and the apartment looked more and more of a mess and it was nag-nag every night until finally they got disgusted and wouldn't talk to each other any more. Jake's sister used to come to see Irma and would leave one of the Russian wolfhounds there to amuse the children and cheer her up. But nobody had any idea how low in her mind Irma was, because she kept up a good front and didn't talk about it.

Finally one day she went out to the butcher's and saw Jake with another woman riding around in his truck. When he came home, she wouldn't let him in and slammed the door in his face and locked it.

That night she put the two children to bed in the front room and fastened paper over the place where there was a pane out in the folding glass doors between the bedroom and the sitting-room. Then she closed all the windows and turned on the gas in the kitchen and sat down to wait. But it occurred to her that if the gas was on the whole night, it might eventually leak through into the bedroom, and she decided she had better wait till near morning and arrange so that the milkman would be sure of coming in and turning it off after she had been suffocated. So she turned the gas off and wrote the milkman a note and put it outside in a milk bottle. Then she waited a good part of the night, so as not to give the gas many hours, and at last turned all the burners of the stove on and sat down in the kitchen to wait. She read a magazine called Airplane Stories to keep her mind off how long it was going to take. It wasn't bad—she just gradually became unconscious.

But there was no door between the kitchen and the sitting-room, and she hadn't allowed enough time for both of the rooms to get filled. When the milkman came in the morning and broke in, she was still alive and they brought her to.

Irma's attempted suicide had no effect on Jake. He told her she had only done it to make people pity her and came back to flop every night as usual without having anything to say to her.

III

Beaver Street, off Flushing Avenue, is a sort of Sicilian section. It is an old part of Brooklyn and most of the buildings are old-fashioned frame affairs covered with clapboards, and a faded brownish yellowish, as if they had never been painted any particular color since they were first put up sixty years ago. They run to wooden cornices with little fancy faded friezes and little peaked projecting fancy hoods over the windows. There is also a sprinkling of new stucco houses in the Mediterranean taste, covered with pink, white and green scales like the jars of peppermint and wintergreen candy tablets in the little corner candy and cigar stores.

The Dimicelis live in one of the faded buildings above a grocery store. They had to move there from a better apartment when Mr. Dimiceli was earning so little. They don't know many of the Italians in the neighborhood—they are not so friendly, because Mr. Dimiceli is a respectable man who speaks not Sicilian dialect but good Italian and used to be in business for himself. The surrounding tenements are full of Italians of the class that knife each other and live in squalor. The Dimicelis' flat is absolutely clean and it is furnished with a vivid color which contrasts with the discolored streets of Flushing. The walls of every room are decorated with bright religious prints in green, blue and red—the Bleeding Heart, the Holy Family and the Virgin with flowers in her arms over the bed in the bedroom, the Last Supper over the kitchen

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table; and the whole place has the brightness and the clear outlines of one of those simple prints: bedroom walls in green, kitchen oilcloth in blue and white squares, kitchen curtains in green and white, sink and kitchen table absolutely white, three yellow canaries in yellow cages in the kitchen.

The Dimicelis themselves are clear, vivid and handsome, too. The mother and daughter have just been out to the hospital, and they are wearing clean dresses in plain colors, the black-eyed daughter, white, and the mother, with her black hair smoked gray, blue—with black stockings and polished shoes. Mrs. Dimiceli is a small woman with a quick attractive, fine-boned face, where irony, sadness, pride and calm succeed each other in responsive flashes.

Mr. Dimiceli is less a Sicilian than a type who has become familiar all over the world with the development of modern engineering. He is tall and thin with strong dark eyes like lenses behind the lenses of rimless spectacles, strong black hair brushed back and parted in the middle and long flexible tool-like fingers. Mr. Dimiceli left Sicily when he was a young man and went to France, where he worked for thirteen years as a skilled machinist in automobile plants. Several years before the War, he came back to Palermo and went into business as an electrical contractor. Electricity was at that time still more or less of a novelty in Sicily and Mr. Dimiceli got a good many commissions wiring Sicilian towns. Then the War broke and he had to serve. He went through the whole four years and a half of it as a sergeant of horse artillery. There is a picture of him in the apartment with his képi, a Caruso mustache and a whole rainbow of campaign ribbons. During the War he had Mrs. Dimiceli sell all his electrical equipment so that the family would have something to live on in case he got killed.

When the War was over and he came home to Palermo, he couldn't get his business back again because it had been captured while he was away by other contractors who had sprung up in the meantime. Finally, he decided that there were better opportunities in America than in Europe, so he brought the family over and got a job with a company on Long Island that made automobile parts. He became shop superintendent and worked there until the fall of '29, when the company sold the patent on a piston it had been making to a firm in Cleveland and sent all its big machines out there. They laid off something like three hundred men and among them Mr. Dimiceli: they gave him a recommendation which said that he was "a very reliable man and only the fact we are reducing our production forces us to part with him." They only kept on the men who had been with them longest. Mr. Dimiceli, however, got a job the next month with the Otis Elevator Company, but as the demand for elevators was declining, the Otis people, also, were obliged to lay off their newest men last spring.

After that, Mr. Dimiceli went out every day looking for work, but all he was able to find was odd jobs at the rate of one or two days a month. Sometimes the best he could do was to make a dollar a day driving a truck. Mrs. Dimiceli had to begin to look for work herself, and she succeeded from time to time in getting from $7 to $12 a week finishing dresses for a Brooklyn dressmaker. The youngest son also turned to, and earned $5 a week as a delivery boy. The eldest son was married and had a child and made only $20 a week as a presser, so that he couldn't help them out. The family had come down in the world and as time went on, they couldn't see how they were going to be able even to stick where they were. They owed three months' rent on their new and inferior apartment, and it was only the fact that the landlord was an Italian and a friend of theirs that made it possible for them to stay on there.

Mr. Dimiceli was a man in his fifties, who had once been a successful contractor in Palermo, whose career had been broken up by the War, and who now spent every day going the rounds of the factories in Brooklyn and Jersey and not being able to get even the lowest paid job. Wednesday night, when he came home he was nervous and gloomy, but the family didn't notice it particularly because he was nervous and gloomy every night. He would come back and read the paper and sometimes just lie down on the bed without talking. Nobody had any suspicion of what he was going to do. The family were down listening to the radio in the apartment of the woman below, when the youngest boy, who was coming upstairs, heard a shot from their apartment. He found his father sitting in the kitchen with his head all covered with blood. He had turned the gas in the stove on, too, but had evidently been afraid that that wouldn't be quick enough. They took him to the hospital, and the doctors couldn't tell Mrs. Dimiceli whether he was going to live or die.

Mrs. Dimiceli says that the Italians who come over and go in for racketeering in America have wonderful opportunities, but that it is no place for a skilled machinist. EDMUND WILSON.

Once, at Belshazzar's Feast

Once, at Belshazzar's feast, they saw, amazed,
A finger trace above the wine and bread
Strange and portentous prophecies that blazed
A warning such as we had never read.
But there were many torches to assail
That Angel whose quick shadow brushed the hall,
And long before his legions could prevail
They had outlived the scripture on the wall.

Often the spectral and unbidden guest
Sits quietly beside us where we sup,
And with our own his thirsty mouth is pressed
Against the bitter, ceremonial cup. . .
Time will forget who hastened from the room,
Who saw the fiery signature of doom.

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS.

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The Président de Brosses

A CHARMING and sometimes forgotten feature of the world as it used to be before the age of trains and telephones was the provincial capital. When Edinburgh was as far from London as Vienna is today, it was natural—it was inevitable—that it should be the center of a local civilization, which, while it remained politically and linguistically British, developed a color and a character of its own. In France there was the same pleasant phenomenon. Bordeaux, Toulouse, Aix-en-Provence—up to the end of the eighteenth century each of these was in truth a capital where a peculiar culture had grown up that was at once French and idiosyncratic. An impossibility today! It is hard to believe, as one whisks through Dijon in a tram, that here, a hundred and fifty years ago, was the center of a distinct and vigorous civilization—until, perhaps, one leaves the tram, and turns aside into the rue de la Préfecture. Ah! One has come upon a vanished age. The houses, so solid and yet so vivacious, with their cobbled courts and colored tiles, seem to be withdrawn into an aristocratic resignation. Memory and forgetfulness are everywhere. It is the moment to reflect upon the Président de Brosses.

Dijon, the capital of Burgundy, had become, in the eighteenth century, preëminently a city of magistrates. There the provincial *parlement* assembled and the laws were administered by the hereditary judges, the nobility of the long robe, whose rule was more immediate, more impressive and almost more powerful than the King's. Charles de Brosses was born into this aristocracy, and grew up to be a perfect representative of its highest traditions. He was extremely intelligent, admirably conscientious and crammed full of life. He was at once a wit, a scholar, a lawyer and a man of the world. He resembled the generous wine of the country in his combination of gay vitality with richness and strength. His tiny figure and his satirical face, lost in the forest of a judicial wig, might prompt laughter—"the corners of one's mouth," said Diderot, "couldn't help going up when one looked at him"; but he was impressive on the bench; and, late in life, was to prove his patriotism by his intrepid resistance when the privileges of his province were attacked by the royal authority. In his leisure, he devoted himself to every kind of literary and scientific work. A tour in Italy produced a series of amusing letters, which, published posthumously, are still read and remembered; his book on the newly discovered Herculaneum (1750) was the first on the subject; his "Histoire des Navigations des Terres Australes" (1756) was of use to both Cook and Bougainville; his "Culte des Dieux Fétiches" (1760) contained a curious speculation on the origin of the religion of Egypt; his "Traité de la Formation Mécanique des Langues" (1760) was the earliest attempt at a science of etymology; and his labors were concluded with an elaborate edition of Sallust (1777) upon which he had worked for thirty years. The growth of knowledge has converted his researches and his speculations into mere curiosities; but it was natural that the citizens of Dijon should have honored him as one of their most splendid luminaries, and that the Président de Brosses should have been compared in his day to that other great provincial figure of a previous generation—the Président de Montesquieu. Of course, though Dijon was select and Dijon was magnificent, it had to be admitted that there did exist a higher tribunal, at whose bar taste, learning and behavior received their final doom or their crowning approbation: the drawing-rooms of Paris reigned supreme. In those drawing-rooms the Président was well thought of; he had powerful friends at Court; was it not to be expected that at last, in the fullness of time, his worth would be completely recognized and receive its due reward in the highest honor that could fall to a man of his pretensions—a seat in the Academy? A prize, indeed, that it was impossible not to hope for! The promises of other worlds had grown dim and dubious; but here, among the glorious forty, was a definite, an indisputable, immortality—and one, moreover, that possessed the singular advantage of being enjoyable here and now, while the eighteenth-century sun still shone on the rue de la Préfecture.

The Président was at the height of his exuberant manhood—he was not yet fifty—when something occurred which had a strange and unexpected effect upon his history. Voltaire, having quarreled with Frederick the Great and shaken the dust of Potsdam from his feet, had been wandering for some years in uncertainty among the minor states that lay between France and Germany. He had settled for a time at Colmar; he had moved to Lausanne; then he had gone to Geneva and taken a country house in its neighborhood. But the Calvinism of the townspeople, who frowned at his passion for private theatricals, annoyed him; and his eye fell on the territory of Ferney, which was just inside the borders of France, but, lying on the eastern slopes of the Jura mountains, was so remote as to be almost independent of French control and within a drive of the free city of Geneva. This was exactly what he wanted—a secluded abode, where he would have elbow room for his activities, and from which he could bolt at any moment if things became too hot for him. Accordingly, in 1758, he bought Ferney, where he lived for the rest of his life; and

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at the same time he entered into negotiations for the purchase of a neighboring property—that of Tournay—which belonged to the Président de Brosses. The Président, who already had a slight acquaintance with the great man—his wife, a Crévecoeur, was the daughter of one of Voltaire's oldest friends—declared that he would be delighted to oblige him. There was some stiff haggling, for each party prided himself on his business capacity, but eventually Voltaire, for 35,000 francs, became possessed of the domain of Tournay—which included the right to the title of Count—on a life-tenancy.

The bargain, obviously, was something of a gamble; the new Comte de Tournay was sixty-four, and, so he declared, on the point of death; but then he had been on the point of death ever since anyone could remember. When it was all over, the Président had an uneasy feeling that he had been done. The feeling increased as time went on, and his agent informed him that the estate was being allowed to go to rack and ruin. He complained; but the poet replied with a flat denial, declared—what was quite true—that he had built a theatre at Tournay, and begged the Président to come and see his latest tragedy performed in it. A little later, a new maneuver began: Voltaire proposed that he should buy the property outright. The Président was not altogether averse; but this time he was far more cautious; as the negotiations proceeded, he became privately convinced that an attempt was being made to cheat him; but he said nothing; and the proposal lapsed. Voltaire, on his side, was none too pleased with his bargain. The land of Tournay was poor, and the countship had brought with it various responsibilities and expenses not at all to his taste. He was vexed; and his vexation took the form of bothering the Président, in letter after letter, with a multitude of legal questions upon points connected with the property. The Président was also vexed; but he answered every letter and every question with extreme civility.

In this way two years passed—two years during which the Président published his "Culte des Dieux Fétiches" and Voltaire his "Candide." The old creature at Ferney was at last beginning to settle down to the final and by far the most important period of his immense and extraordinary career. Free, rich, happy, with his colossal reputation and his terrific energy, he was starting on the great adventure of his life—his onslaught on Christianity.

Meanwhile, his vitality and his pugnacity were satisfying themselves in a multitude of minor ways. He was belaboring Rousseau, torturing Fréron, annihilating Le Franc de Pompignan; he was corresponding with all the world, he was composing half a dozen tragedies, he was writing the life of Peter the Great, he was preparing a monumental edition of Corneille. When, in the midst of these and a hundred other activities, he received a bill for 281 francs from a peasant called Charlot Baudy for fourteen loads of wood from Tournay, he brushed the matter on one side. More bother from Tournay! But it was ridiculous—why should he pay for wood from his own estate? And besides, he remembered quite well that the Président, before the sale was completed, had told him that he could have as much wood as he wanted. He did nothing, and when Charlot Baudy pressed for the money, refused to pay. Then, early in 1761, a letter arrived from the Président. "Monsieur," he began, "may I ask you to explain something very peculiar." Charlot Baudy, he continued, had, *before the sale of Tournay*, bought from the Président the cut wood on the estate; Baudy had now sent in his account of what he owed the Président, and had subtracted from it the sum of 281 francs for wood supplied to M. de Voltaire; his reason for this was that M. de Voltaire had told him that the wood was a gift from the Président. "Please pardon me," the letter went on, "if I repeat such idle talk, for you certainly realize that I haven't the vaguest notion that you have heard about it, and besides, I don't believe a word of it myself. I consider it merely the talk of a country bumpkin who knows nothing of the customs and manners of society, a man who does not even know that one may indeed send a basket of peaches to one's friend and neighbor, but that it would be a ridiculous breach of the proprieties if one decided to do his neighbor the honor of presenting him with fourteen loads of wood." The sarcasm was clear and cutting, and the Président proceeded to give his own account of what had occurred. He distinctly remembered, he said, that Voltaire, at the time of the negotiations about Tournay, had, in the course of conversation, complained of a lack of firewood, and that he had thereupon recommended Baudy as the man who would supply Voltaire with as much as he wanted. That was all; the offensive notion of a present had never entered his head. "I hope," he concluded, "that you will pay this little bill to Charlot forthwith, because, as I will most assuredly make him pay me, he is certain to sue you for the sum, and this would be the sort of thing in which a man like you would not care to be involved."

It was obvious to anyone in his senses that the Président was right: that his account of the matter was the true one, and that, as he had said, the only reasonable thing for Voltaire to do was to pay Baudy the money—the miserable sum of money!—and finish the business. But Voltaire was not in his senses—he never was when even the most miserable sum of money was concerned. He could not bear to think of parting with 281 francs. It was monstrous; the land and everything on it was his; the wood had been given him; he would not be set down; and this wretched man had dared to be ironical! At any rate, he had had the wood and burned it, and the Président de Brosses might do what he liked. Accordingly, in his next letter, he airily dismissed the subject. "It is no longer a question," he said, "of Charles Baudy and four loads

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of wood"—and proceeded to discuss an entirely different matter. The Président replied in detail, and then reverted for a moment to Baudy. "Four loads —read *fourteen;* you dropped a figure; we call this a *lapsus linguae*"; and he begged Voltaire once more to avoid the painful publicity of a lawsuit. Voltaire made no reply; he hoped the whole thing was over; but he was wrong. In June, the Président sued Baudy for 281 francs, and in July Baudy sued Voltaire for the same sum. The cases came on at the local court, and were adjourned.

And now the fury of the frantic old desperado flamed up sky-high. Seizing his pen, he poured out, in letter after letter to all the lawyers in Dijon, his account of what had happened—the swindling to which he had been subjected—the insults to which he had been exposed. To a particular friend, the Président de Ruffey, he sent a long formal statement of his case, followed by a private sheet of enraged argumentation. As for his enemy, he was no longer a président—the little bewigged monster —he was a fetish. He would see to it that the nickname stuck. "The Fétiche," he shrieked, "is asking me to pay for his loads of wood and kindling. . . . The wretch is deluging me with writs. And to think that he was acting so outrageously at the very time I was paying him 47,000 francs! . . . No wonder he's afraid! It's not a question of making him ridiculous; it's a question of covering him with ignominy. It exasperates me. But he'll pay dearly for the villainy of so low and dastardly a lawsuit." Finally he addressed the Fétiche himself in a letter composed in his most magnificent style. "So you called on me, Monsieur, you offered me your friendship, only to poison the last days of my life with a lawsuit." In great detail he went over the whole dispute. With singular violence, and no less singular obtuseness, he asserted the hopelessly contradictory propositions, both that the wood was his by purchase and that the Président had given it him; he hinted that his enemy would make use of his position to pervert the course of justice; and he ended with threats. "If my lord the Chancellor, and the Ministers and all Paris must be told about your suit, let them be, and if in all your respectable profession there is one person who approves of you, then I will hold myself condemned."

The Président's moment had come—the testing moment of his life. What was he to do? It was still not too late to withdraw, to pay the money with a shrug of the shoulders and put an end to this fearful hubbub and this terrifying enmity. For a short space he wavered. It was true that Voltaire was the greatest writer of the age, and perhaps he deserved some allowances on that score. In any case, he was an extremely dangerous antagonist—a man who had made mincemeat of all his literary opponents and fought on equal terms with Frederick the Great. But no! It was intolerable! His Burgundian blood boiled, and the proud traditions of aristocracy and the judicial habits of a lifetime asserted themselves. "The above-mentioned, they tell me," so he explained to a friend, "is a dangerous man. But does that mean we must let his wrong-doing go unpunished? On the contrary, men like him are the very ones who ought to be punished. I don't fear him. . . . People admire him because he writes excellent poems. There's no doubt he does write excellent ones. But it's his poems people will have to admire." And so, taking Voltaire's letter, he wrote upon the margin of it a reply, in which he not only rebutted his arguments, but told him exactly what he thought of him. Point by point he exposed the futility of Voltaire's contentions. He showed that there was actually a clause in the lease, by which the cut wood on the estate was specifically excepted from the sale. He offered to drop the matter if Voltaire would send him a receipt in the following terms: "I the undersigned, François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, knight, gentleman-in-waiting to the King, herewith acknowledge that M. de Brosses, Président of the Parlement, has presented me with . . . loads of firewood worth 281 francs, for which I thank him." He pointed out that otherwise he had nothing to do with the business, that Voltaire owed the money to Charlot Baudy, and that it was extraordinary to see "so rich and illustrious a man fretting over some 280 francs which he owes to a peasant for firewood." His incidental remarks were nothing if not outspoken. "In truth," he wrote, "I fear for humanity when I see so great a genius with so small a heart, ceaselessly plagued by petty suspicions and niggardliness. It is you yourself who are poisoning a life that is otherwise so rich in opportunities for happiness." As for the suggestion that he would bring undue influence to bear upon the case—"It is not fitting to speak in this fashion and in the future be discreet enough to say nothing of the sort to a judge." "Consider the matter closed," the letter concluded, "write me nothing more about it, and above all nothing in this vein. I offer you, Monsieur, the Persian greeting: *Mens sana in corpore sano.*"

It is difficult indeed to imagine the scene at Ferney while Voltaire was deciphering, on the edges of his own letter, this devastating reply. But there was worse to follow. A note came from the Président de Ruffey, in which, with infinite politeness, he made it clear that in his opinion Voltaire had no case, and that he had better pay. At the same time Ruffey wrote to Madame Denis, Voltaire's niece, advising her to give the money privately to Baudy. Madame Denis had not the courage to do so; she showed the letter to her uncle, who, in a dictated reply, still tried to keep up an appearance of self-confidence. "I'm not afraid of Fetishes," he added in his own hand. "Fetishes ought to be afraid of me." And again, at the bottom of the paper, he scribbled: "N. B. There is only one opinion you can have of the Fétiche." But such screams were useless; the game was up. The Président's letter remained unanswered; Voltaire swallowed in silence the incredible affront; and when, a little

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later, the Président, feeling that he could afford to be magnanimous, informed a common friend that he would cancel his account with Baudy if Voltaire gave 281 francs to the poor of Tournay, the great man was glad enough to fall in with the suggestion.

The Président had triumphed; but could he really have supposed that he would escape from such an antagonist unscathed? The sequel came ten years later, when the Président Hénault died and left a seat vacant at the Academy. There was a strong movement in favor of electing the Président de Brosses. There appeared to be no other very suitable candidate; his friends rallied round him; and D'Alembert, writing to Voltaire from Paris, assured him that there was every likelihood that "ce plat Président" would be chosen for the vacant place. The serious feature of the case was that the old Maréchal de Richelieu, who, after a lifetime of fighting and gallantry, amused his decrepitude by making his influence felt in affairs of this kind, supported him. What was to be done? Voltaire was equal to the occasion: his letters flew. At all costs the Fétiche must be kept out. He wrote repeatedly to Richelieu, in that tone of delicate cajolery of which he was a master, touching upon their ancient friendship, and spinning a strange tale of the perfidies committed by *"ce petit persécuteur nasillonneur,"* until the Maréchal melted, and promised to withdraw his support. Finally, Voltaire despatched to D'Alembert a signed declaration to the effect that he would himself resign from the Academy if Brosses was elected. This settled the matter, and no more was heard of the candidacy of the Président. It seemed likely that he never knew what it was that had balked him of the ambition of his life. For 281 francs he had lost the immortality of the Academy. A bad bargain, no doubt; and yet, after all, the transaction had gained him another, and in fact a unique, distinction: he would go down to history as the man who had got the better of Voltaire.

LYTTON STRACHEY.

Chain Stores: Menace or Promise?

II: *The Enemies of the Chains*

TO THE HOUSEWIFE and the ordinary citizen, the fight between the chain store and the independent is merely a battle for the customer's dollar. Considered a bit more critically, it is a struggle between an old and a new method of distribution. The small grocer, however, sees other factors in the situation. He is convinced that the world owes him a living and that some sort of natural law is invaded when his existence is threatened by the chain store or any other institution. He is therefore making frantic appeals to the people to save him. "Patronize your neighborhood grocer," he cries from street-car cards and newspaper ads. He rests his case on that appeal and seems to think that the problem of the small grocery store calls for rescue work rather than economic study. Yet after all, it seems sufficiently obvious that the issue will have to be settled eventually, and ought to be considered now in terms of the public's interest rather than the merchant's.

But the real values in the case are being greatly obscured by the dust raised by the professional defenders of the independent groceries. For some reason the continued existence of the old home town is thought to be dependent on the continued existence of the independent grocer. In Birmingham the billboards break out with posters proclaiming that "the future of Birmingham depends on your loyalty to home merchants." The radio spreads the message every night among the homes of the iron city. A new newspaper, The Anti-Chain Advocate, is launched and, we are informed, the "Honorable Charles C. McCall, candidate for Governor, has put chains in his platform." In a single issue of a trade paper I find the following: A report that in some parts of Florida the success of the Jacksonville Loyalty League has been so great that customers fear to go into chain stores lest they be submitted to social ostracism. In St. Louis, neighborhood papers, illustrated with anti-chain-store cartoons and featuring items about chain-store clerks being fined for giving short weight and short change, are handed to all customers. In Nashville, the Merchant's Minute Men are arranging for radio talks and for prizes in the schools for the best essays on "Why My Parents Should Trade with the Independent Merchant." In Denver 460 independent merchants organize, name a campaign manager, spend $3,000 broadcasting and distribute 150,000 copies of a newspaper every week. In Grand Rapids, the movement proceeds with great bitterness, so that a department store rumored falsely to be in a chain is swamped by calls to verify the report. This agitation is sweeping over the country with a virulence which has not been matched in business since those early days in the Pennsylvania oil regions when the "independents" rose up in their wrath against John D. Rockefeller's "Anaconda."

The most redoubtable of all the anti-chain-store battlers is that peerless warrior of the air, Mr. W. K. Henderson of Shreveport, Louisiana. Hender-

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son once heard an orator denouncing the chains at a Chamber of Commerce banquet. He invited the man to speak over his private broadcasting station. The speaker's eloquence stirred Henderson strangely. At the end of the speech, Henderson shot through his microphone that "these dirty, sneaking chains are coming into your town and taking away your money and sending it out to a bunch of crooked, no-account loafers in Wall Street." The blast of letters that came back to Mr. Henderson in the next few days amazed him. It was evident that he had, almost unintentionally, hit a rich vein and he proceeded to work it. Soon his station, with his midnight greeting of "Hello, World," became nationally known. Henderson's profane abuse had a spice in it that pleased the palates of the angry small store owners. And when Senator Dill of Washington took Henderson to task for cussin' over the air, it was just so much free advertising for him.

Henderson collected large sums from individual grocers and grocers' associations everywhere. Mr. John T. Westfall, secretary of the St. Louis Wholesale Grocers' Association, recently said his group had sent $600 to help carry on the good work. Then Henderson began selling coffee over the radio—Hello World Coffee—at a dollar a pound. There is something rather contradictory in the fact that Mr. Henderson, after painting horrific pictures of how the chains draw money away from the town and its grocers, then proceeds in the next part of his radio program to sell coffee to the store's customers at a dollar a pound. He is said to have sold 1,000 pounds a day. Somehow the grocery-store clique of the Hello World station didn't complain about these coffee sales. But when Henderson began selling other articles, the long overdue cooling process set in.

More recently Henderson unearthed that dreadful old sinner, the retail trading stamp, and picked St. Louis as a hot spot for exploiting it. He organized a corporation, made himself chairman of the board and interested two gentlemen who owned stock in the St. Louis Cardinals. He then signed up about two hundred grocery stores to use Hello World Trading Stamps. But the St. Louis Retail Grocers' Association looked with disfavor on that bright idea and within the last few months Mr. Henderson has confessed the error of his ways and abandoned the stamps. Now he is preparing a gigantic petition to be signed by millions of housewives throughout this broad land, a petition which will be presented to Congress in the hope that action will be taken against the chains.

Mr. Henderson has opened up a prosperous territory which imitators have been quick to exploit. There is Mr. Winfield H. Caslow of Grand Rapids. He began fighting the chains with a little neighborhood weekly which proved a disastrous venture and cost him $2,000. Then he organized a league of merchants to carry on the war, but this also died on his hands, leaving him with a capital of only $65. Mr. Caslow's success story from this point is inspiring. He heard the voice of Henderson and realized the possibilities of the radio. He hired $55 worth of time on the local stations and delivered a blast against the chains for twenty minutes. Now he has 250 merchants behind him contributing to the cause. He holds meetings and takes up a collection to "carry on the work." He has volunteer scouts picking up scraps of gossip about the evil things that take place in chain stores and these he retails over the air. The racket must be a good one. There are now at least twelve broadcasting stations devoting their energies to fighting the chain monster. Brother Henderson himself has even developed into something of a chain broadcaster. He has two stations.

I have a list of twenty-four newspapers which have been started to fight the chains. Their names —Chained, Chain Store Menace, C. S. Menace, Hello World, The Booster—indicate their mission and quality. In a few instances they are old papers which have been revived for the new purpose. But they are pretty much of a pattern and in most cases they are sold in bulk to retail merchants for free distribution. More than half these papers are to be found in six Southern states.

In the next place there are the associations—some 291 of them—organized in various states to fight the common enemy. Of course, many long established groups of retailers and wholesalers are carrying on a constant propaganda against chain stores. These groups represent the legitimate and honest antagonism of the smaller merchants to a system of merchandising which they believe is causing them loss. But the associations I refer to are mushroom affairs which have sprung up, often under the inspiration of some industrious racketeer, to exploit the antagonism of the small merchant to the chain. The Journal of Commerce and Finance has characterized these anti-chain movements as the work of a band of unscrupulous and essentially parasitic promoters. They have multiplied so rapidly in the last year that the National Association of Retail Merchants has found it necessary to warn its members against racketeering in anti-chain legislation.

These agitators are found chiefly in towns of less than 20,000 population, and over 60 percent of them in towns of less than 10,000. They have had a powerful influence apparently, and one finds the principal congressional foes of the chains coming from those states where these associations have been most active. Nevertheless, all the associations which I have located are limited to towns whose combined population is about 7,000,000, or a little less than 6 percent of the population of the whole country. As a result, a number of bills whose admitted purpose was to cripple or destroy the chain store have been introduced into the legislatures of twenty states since January 1, 1929. I find some fifty-seven different bills, most of them,

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of course, attemping to deal with the problem by taxing the chain. I am not able to say with certainty just what the fate of all these measures was, but at least nine of them—all tax measures—were passed. The most severe of them was in Kentucky, where taxes on gross sales are graduated on all sales over $400,000 on a scale which would assess a pretty heavy tax on a chain operating as many as twenty stores in the state. The more drastic measures proposed have not succeeded in passing. An example of these proposals is found in the six bills introduced into the legislature of Illinois, none of which, however, was ever enacted into law:

1. A tax of $5,000 per store on each store over three.
2. A tax of $200 per store on each outlet over one.
3. A tax of one percent of gross annual receipts on all chain stores.
4. A tax of one percent on gross annual receipts of all chain stores in cities of over 500,000 population.
5. Right to city councils in cities and president of board of trustees in villages to tax, license and regulate operation of retail outlets having more than five units.
6. A similar bill, but adding a limitation of $500 to the city or village tax which might be imposed.
7. A bill to tax chain stores from $5 to $750 according to gross sales.

Some proposals go further. Thus, in Missouri, there was an attempt to graduate the tax on each additional store from $5 to $10,000 on the seventh store.

Most of the bills, however, propose taxes of $50 a year on each outlet in the chain. Such bills, of course, are futile. No chain store is going to be affected by a tax of a dollar a week. They are introduced purely as sops to the anti-chain-store propagandists by obsequious politicians in the legislatures.

One of the results of all this has been completely to obscure the real issues in this controversy; more particularly to obscure the real values in the independent stores' own cause. It would be preposterous to assume that nothing can be said in defense of the independents. But whatever the defense should be, it is certainly not the kind which is being offered by these frantic, feverish, angry crusaders who have been carrying on their battle through racketeering associations, radio stations and newspapers.

There are retailers who have been attacking their problem in a very different way and with a far more intelligent approach. In the first place, they have recognized that there is something the matter with the independent—or at least with some of them. In several surveys the discovery was made that about one-third of the independent grocers go out of business in a year. This means nothing less than a complete 100-percent mortality every three years. The farm in its most desolate and profitless regions can show no such mortal illness as this. In Louisville, Kentucky, intelligent food retailers began to ask themselves what caused it. Was it the chain? Or were there other causes? Were the causes of such a nature that they could be dealt with? Instead of launching an association and a brace of crusading movements, they evolved a plan to study themselves. They turned the searchlight upon their own affairs and to do this they enlisted the assistance of the Department of Commerce of the United States. During the years of their exhaustive investigation they have examined every corner of the food business of Louisville. The eyes of the whole retailing world have been riveted on this study, which has come to be known as the Louisville survey, and its results are awaited with the deepest interest.

My own impression is that almost all the folly and confusion in this whole discussion arise out of a stubborn refusal of everybody engaged in it to define the word independent. It is preposterous to compare chains and independents, whether in management, prices, profits or in any other respect, because the word independent in such comparisons means nothing. Surveys inform you that chains can sell cheaper than independents and then you are treated to two columns of prices, one coming from chains, more or less alike, the others coming from a lot of individually owned stores representing a dozen different types. Here is an independent store with an annual gross turnover of $100,000, managed by an intelligent, trained, progressive retail merchant. Here is an independent grocer with an annual gross turnover of $10,000, managed by a man who has not the intelligence to run a grocery store, who buys in tiny quantities, knows nothing of merchandising and can never earn even a meager living out of his store. What is to be gained by bunching the prices of these two institutions, averaging up their costs and their methods, calling the result a figure reflecting independent-store operation and then comparing it with the figure derived from a group of chain stores?

To clarify the question further—and it seems to me to expose the crux of the whole controversy—I have prepared a classification of grocery stores. The figures are based on the census of distribution made in 1927 by the United States Chamber of Commerce and the Bureau of the Census, based upon an investigation of eleven cities, large and small. In these eleven cities were found 20,886 grocery stores. In order to simplify treatment of the matter I have reduced them to a grouping of one hundred stores. Out of one hundred stores, twenty-one were chain-owned stores and seventy-nine were independents.

These independents represented all kinds of stores from well managed and financed groceries to ill nourished little shops on the verge of bankruptcy —a few cans on shabby shelves in the front room of some man's home. The Department of Commerce insists that a retail food store cannot show

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a profit large enough to exist unless it has a turnover of at least $50,000. This would mean gross sales of $160 a day. Others put the minimum at $40,000 a year. Certainly a store doing $40,000 a year would not be a large one. I give here the classes of stores of the seventy-nine independents, graded according to gross sales.

Gross sales under $5,000 yearly	22 stores
Gross sales over $5,000, under $10,000	17 stores
Gross sales over $10,000, under $25,000	20 stores
Gross sales over $25,000, under $50,000	10 stores
Gross sales over $50,000	10 stores

A man who has gross sales of not over $5,000 does not make a net profit of over $250 a year, or about $5 a week. Some experts insist he does not make that much. A man with gross sales of $25,000 a year does not make a profit of more than $1,200 a year, or about $25 a week—only slightly more than the pay of the average office boy.

A glance reveals that in these seventy-nine independent groceries fifty-nine merchants with sales under $25,000 a year are not making even the shadow of a living out of their stores. There are another ten under $50,000 who are just scratching along. There are ten others whose sales are over $50,000 and who may be classed as capable merchants.

Now then, in this controversy between chain-store groceries and independents, whom are we talking about when we compare chains and independents? When we defend the chains and attempt to pass laws to preserve the independents, whom are we thinking about—these $5,000-a-year groceries, these fifty-nine groceries that do not even make a living, these twenty independent merchants who do make a living and run economically, or the ten or twenty stores which may be classed as serious merchandising ventures? The smaller stores are not hurt by the chains. They are born with their death wounds in their vitals. They are destined to die of their own inherent weaknesses. They will all go out of business in the next three years. This battle for the independents was going on with great gusto three years ago. Of the small independents in whose behalf that campaign was being waged then, practically all have died commercially. The objects of the present crusaders' solicitude are a brand new crop.

The Louisville survey has revealed some interesting facts about these fragile independents. In the eight years from 1921 to 1928 inclusive, some 2077 retail grocery stores were started. Of this number 45 percent went out of business in the first year of their lives. Of course the unhappy proprietors blame it on the chains. But back in the eight years from 1891 to 1898 there were no chains to blight these grocery starters. In those eight years 1440 new stores were started. And of these 43 percent went out of business in the first year of their lives.

In 1921 some 255 grocery stores were set up in Louisville. At the end of eight years only thirty were still in business. Just 12 percent survived for eight years. This appalling mortality is attributed to the chains. Back in 1891 there were 192 new grocery stores launched in Louisville. There were no chains then, yet at the end of eight years only twenty-five survived. This was 13 percent; a very striking similarity to the experience of the stores of the last decade.

In 1929, 26 percent of all individually owned grocery stores in Louisville closed their doors. Thirty years before, when there were no chains to blame, the mortality was just about the same.

The mortality, of course, is among the weak, poorly financed, badly managed groceries with a small turnover—usually under $25,000 a year. The other grocers continue to do business and in many cases prosper, in spite of the chain competition.

In the course of these articles I shall show how the wise food merchant is taking measures to keep his business abreast of modern merchandising practices, and how he is deriving from his own efforts all the protection he needs from the chains. All the pother, all the ballyhoo, all the radio and newspaper and political agitation, so far as the grocer is concerned, is carried on in behalf of these frail, anemic, helplessly crippled small grocers, economically impossible, riding to bankruptcy on the wings of their own inefficiency. Unfortunately an immense amount of energy has been consumed trying to raise in the public mind the notion that these little merchants, no matter how small and inefficient, have some kind of God-given right to be in the grocery business, that the public owes these grocers a living. There has been so much of this kind of talk among professional grocery champions that a recent speaker undertook to reply to it in the following language:

> There is no law save that of efficient utility operation for any phase of business. Business of all types has a great responsibility to the public, but the public has only a limited responsibility to business. Toward the individual business man the public has only the responsibility of paying for what it takes. The argument that a particular business should be supported is usually without rhyme or reason. There is no compulsion on the public's part to make a profit for anyone.

That statement was made by the president of a great national wholesale association at a wholesalers' convention two years ago.

JOHN T. FLYNN.

In his third article, to be published next week, Mr. Flynn reports the results of a survey of comparative prices in chain and independent grocery stores.—THE EDITORS.

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Washington Notes

Death of Longworth—Humanizing Hoover—Coralling the Southern Votes—Purging the Party—Trump Cards for Progressives

THE SUDDEN death of Nicholas Longworth, besides causing keen personal sorrow among his many friends, has a considerable political significance. The relative strength of the parties in the next House probably will remain unchanged. The Longworth district in Cincinnati is normally Republican and will in all likelihood elect a Republican successor to "Nick" next November. Even conceding that, however, the chances for the election of a Republican speaker are diminished.

Unquestionably John Q. Tilson of Connecticut will be his party's choice for speaker when the caucus is reconvened next fall. As the recognized floor leader, not only is he the logical selection but beyond question he will have the support of the White House. Tilson has been a much more unwavering and loyal Hoover supporter than any other House leader. He stuck by the "Chief" on the bonus loan in the last session and on one or two other matters when Longworth, Snell and Bachrach all went in the other direction. Incidentally, Mr. Tilson took a severe drubbing as the result of his loyalty and showed up on two roll calls with practically no followers. Under the circumstances it is unthinkable he should not have Mr. Hoover's earnest support, which will certainly be enough, I should say, to discourage other contenders and ensure him the caucus nomination. It will not, however, ensure him the election, and I think almost anyone will agree the Republicans have less chance of organizing the House as a result of Longworth's death.

One general reason for this is the fact that "Nick" was not only vastly more popular than Tilson, but much shrewder, more resourceful and more tactful. A specific reason is that Mr. Paul Kvale, the lone Farmer-Labor member of the next House, had contracted a friendship with Mr. Longworth and, it was pretty well understood, intended to vote for him for personal reasons. Mr. Kvale has no such feeling of affection toward Mr. Tilson and is now just as likely to vote one way as the other. The net political result of Mr. Longworth's death has been to improve the chances for a Democratic speaker.

Apart from the question of the next speaker, the workings of the various political propaganda machines are productive of most interest in Washington these days. The whirling of their wheels is incessant and their output larger and more juicy than in any former recess period I can recall. Since the assumption of his duties by the presidential secretary, Mr. Joslin, there has been a marked change in the White House publicity. There has been general comment concerning the effort to "humanize" Mr. Hoover, and in this effort the Joslin hand is easily discernible. Various and sundry small human-interest stories, which under the somewhat sluggish Akerson would either have been muffed completely or badly mangled, are molded by the more nimble and devoted Joslin into fairly good first-page stuff.

Since Joslin's advent and Mr. Hoover's return, I am told, there has been considerable prodding of the Republican National Committee publicity machine and Mr. James West, its director, has been requested, urged and beseeched to speed up and put a little more punch into his productions. I rather sympathize with Mr. West and think he has done his best. Perhaps someone else could have done better, but there was no one else available and it is undeniably true that Mr. West has been heavily handicapped.

It must be remembered that it is much easier to attack than to defend. The party and President whom Mr. West is employed to defend have been more completely on the defensive and for a longer time than any party or President since Andrew Johnson. President Hoover has received more brickbats and had fewer friends to return them than any President since that time. Under the circumstances Mr. West has done about as well as could be expected. It is not all his fault—he has had pretty poor material to work with; his principals, employers and party leaders have furnished the Democrats and progressives with more and better ammunition than they had any right to expect.

Prodding may make Mr. West extend himself a little this summer, but there will be no appreciable improvement in publicity until prosperity returns. If it returns it will take care of Mr. Hoover's predicament and it will be a matter of little importance whether Mr. West puts on added steam or takes a vacation.

As to the humanizing effort, that, I am credibly informed, is to continue through the summer and fall. By the time Congress meets again the picture of the "Chief" as a blue-print economist and engineer surrounded by charts, figures and journalistic theorems, will, it is hoped, be supplanted in the public mind by one of a kindly, friendly soul, fond of sports, interested in the popular heroes of the day, full of human emotions and feeling. The difficulty about doing this humanizing job for the "Chief" is, they tell me, that he will lend himself willingly to the game for quite a spell and then, suddenly growing tired and resentful, refuse to play any longer, letting some of the very best bets go completely to waste.

Behind all this White House and Committee publicity program a good deal of practical politics is being played in the interests of the administration, obvious enough to those who are accustomed to Republican politics but not clear to the public. It is at this time—approximately fourteen months ahead of the national convention—that the forces of an administration seeking to succeed itself always get under way. And when the administration is Republican, the early field for operations is in the South. What is essential for a Republican renomination is the control of the delegations from the eleven to thirteen states in which the Republican party under normal conditions is a hollow sham and in which the Republican candidates have no chance of success in the general election. This perhaps is not a palatable fact for the highly moral leaders of the Grand Old Party to contemplate, and it is always an embarrassing one for them to acknowledge—and they seldom do.

It would, I think, be particularly embarrassing at this juncture for Mr. Hoover, in accord with the proclamations which he made soon after entering the White House, to cleanse the party in the Southern states and reorganize it on a new and better basis. This proclamation was generally

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applauded in the press, though not cheered at all by practical politicians. But they need not have worried. Nothing has come of it. Efforts, it is true, were made, but they have without exception proved abortive and there has been no change in any state so far as party control is concerned.

The party leaders, white and Negro, denounced at White House press conferences and sentenced to expulsion and exile, are still doing business at the same old stand and in the same old way. Moreover, in the very recent past, Postmaster General Walter F. Brown, recognized as the real political adviser of the administration and the power behind the National Committee, returned from an extended trip through Southern states during which he conferred with national committeemen, black and white, in nearly all these states. Among those with whom he talked were the identical men branded by the White House in 1929 as unworthy of administration encouragement, and whom the President, as the titular leader of his party, condemned as discreditable and degraded. Now they are being lined up by a member of his Cabinet for the Hoover renomination —and Mr. Brown reports that the South will be a unit for him in the convention. Of course it will. The South is always a unit for the renomination of a Republican President.

I do not mean to accuse Mr. Hoover of dishonesty in his attitude in this matter. I have not the slightest doubt that two years ago he was genuinely shocked at the disclosures of the barter and sale of federal offices by Republican leaders, black and white, in the South. Nor do I doubt the sincerity of his determination to throw them out and have a new and more decent deal. Most Republican Presidents have felt that way about the Southern situation. The "Chief" decided to be the first to do something about it. But it could not be done. Almost any politician could have told him that and several did.

In less than a year political ideals gave way to practical political necessities and today the plan to purge the party in the South is a joke. No one connected with the administration ever mentions it and everybody seems anxious to forget it. I do not see why. In the light of Mr. Brown's recent visit South, his declaration concerning the unity of Mr. Hoover's support there and the easily available facts of the complete reinstatement of the banished leaders of the Perry Howard type, I do not see why the Democratic and progressive propagandists, who have been steadily on the job in Washington since Congress adjourned, do not clasp this development to their bosoms. It seems to me it would be a prize package. However, they probably have enough to keep going for some time and their argument is that they can play this card more effectively when the convention meets and Mr. Brown starts delivering his Southern delegations. The point I wish to make is that the story of the effort to "purge the party in the South" and how it has worked out under Mr. Hoover and Mr. Brown can be used with damaging effect if it is repeated from now on. In my estimation it is a story just made to order for the anti-administration publicists. But perhaps they have their reasons for ignoring it. The mental workings and reactions of these political publicity sharks have always baffled me. Even the best of them are hard to follow.

Washington. T. R. B.

Fellow Passengers

I HAVE been looking at this luxurious freight of passengers around me, and thinking of those earlier days on my way to Italy, of those one-time travelers with their Baedekers, their notes on art, their little books of earnest addresses, what to see, where to find this, where to find that. These people on my boat at this season belong, of course, to the wintering class; they make a cruise now and then but mostly sojourn where the sun is thought to be kinder or life somewhat simpler than in America. If it is to be an empty life, it is at least less scattered and interrupted: if it is to be a sinful life, it is more single and concentrated. They belong to the cornfed class. At home, most of them have everything they want, or everything, at least, that they have seen other people seeming to want. For the most part they look neither coarse nor refined. They could not be said to look interesting, save as a curious generalized phenomenon. Their conversation is simple, not strident, not much of anything. They play bridge a good deal, and some of them walk the deck. They drink, but not often excessively. The women have fine furs and a great many gowns to change into as the voyage progresses. In the whole crowd of these passengers I have not seen a Baedeker

Not seeing the Baedekers like that, I found myself listening to see what it is in Europe that they are interested in. If they are not bothering to acquaint themselves with the diverse sights and masterpieces, what are they planning? Listening for this point has become a kind of occupation for me. By the end of the trip I have heard several cities mentioned, people have sojourned in them, or perhaps visited the owners of villas and establishments. Otherwise I have not heard one thing mentioned that would fall into the business of culture, or even travelers' curiosity. Not a sentence that would indicate that anyone was to see anything or was interested in anything. I have arisen every morning saying to myself that would not be true, but every day it was true.

Palermo is one of our landing places, we are there for a day. Palermo is one of the most mingled and rich and strange cities in the world, with its Greek and Roman, its Arabic and Spanish, Norman and Italian. Its baroque, its twelfth-century, its Empire, its other stylistic delights, have seemed to many unique in their kind. There are certain tours arranged for the passengers at a high price, driving about town in automobiles, lunch and tea at the best places. Gradually with the procession of the day, with its sun, its chattering life, bright voices and bells ringing, there is a movement among the first-class passengers landward; the little third-class people, mostly Italians, of course, are ashore hours ago, kissing their families and friends, having some wine and boasting how fine America is. We need not dwell on the tours, they were rather fatiguing after being dormant on shipboard. I heard two comments that night at dinner. One was that the young lady studying in Cleveland to be a concert pianist, did not like mosaics (as if, since all effects are possible in mosaics, saying that were not about the same as saying you did not like food) and that anyhow the ship in the Monreale mosaics was too small for even one of Noah's animals. The

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other comment recounted how, along after lunch, the party had finally gone ashore, but had found after a while that the man was merely driving them up and down the same street, the Via Nazionale. There had been some sort of pamphlet giving the sights that the tour included. No one could find a copy, and the man said they had told him nowhere to go and so he was just driving. An old lady, at length, found a copy of the pamphlet in her bag; it was tea time by then and they were scheduled for the Hotel des Palmes. Several friends of theirs had gone ashore and played some golf.

Some of the passengers were bound for Rome, the larger part were on their way north, many to Villefranche and onwards. At Naples the boat would arrive at six o'clock in the morning and leave at one that afternoon. By a fair amount of exertion you could go to Pompeii, to the Museum and for a ride about the town. As for me, I was landing; I was to return to Naples later and there was no hurry.

That morning there were diverse people on deck, standing before the panorama of the city, the bay, the mountains beyond, and Vesuvius, with its long, drifting line of smoke, to our right. The sun was bright, the air shining, the colors were white and sharp against the fainter violet and blue of the distance. At breakfast, around nine o'clock, pleasant people had drifted in, and we sat, drawing on all the utmost luxuries from everywhere, eating and talking. Almost no one among them had ever been to Naples, but some of them were going ashore after a while and take a look at it, before the boat sailed. Nobody was going to try for Pompeii, it meant tearing around. A good many from this circle were still in bed, they had been up so late playing bridge.

Finally at noon those of us who are going to Rome are on the train, the express over the new route, nearer the sea and some hours quicker. In half an hour lunch is served, the first sitting, which we have all secured. The dining coach is full of Americans. They are not noisy in the nineteenth-century tradition, but sit as they might sit at the Biltmore. There is about them that air of choosing from the cosmos what you will have in life with the same good-natured indifference and surfeit that they feel over this table d'hote. Of everything they can think of, certainly, most of them have had everything. Presently they must choose what they will eat, and lunch begins.

Lunch is half over before I have taken in the fact that not an eye in the car is looking out. The shades are partially drawn here and there against the light, the food is good. Outside there is a line of shore, broken by fields, by dunes, against a sea line and sky line that are now long and level, and now islands, castles, towers, a sail, a grove of pines. On the right the mountains appear, violet and blue, with snow on their upper slopes; there are hill towns, feudal towers. One need not be very poetic about this, it is there; and we might almost believe that eyes naturally wander out through the windows and across the landscape. But there seems to be a curious energy, or a concentration on lunch and conversation, or better perhaps, an effect of going on one's business. Whatever it is, I find myself complaining that this country is superb and nobody is looking at it; upon which the rich young lady studying to be a concert pianist looks out and makes her mother look out. A little nervous, sensitive boy of eighteen, whose parents live in Rome, comes in to join them at lunch, speaking with a British accent; and some of us look at him a while.

On the way back from the dining car, an Italian professor, home from lecturing in America, stops me at his compartment to introduce me to his daughter of fourteen, who has come down from Rome to meet his boat. He and she point out to me with inquiring eyes a young man of thirty, by the window of their compartment, the only person there with them. He opened the book as soon as the train started, they say, and has not looked up from his reading. I strain over to see what the book is; he is reading Warwick Deeping's "Exile."

There is no need to feel very hot about all this, or to be excited because these people care nothing about how the Romans lived in their houses, or what the design in Greek wall painting was like, or the Battle of Alexander in the Museum, the Cumean Zeus, the Titian Philip II, and so on, or do not want to be bothered on their way northward to the French Riviera and then to Paris, where they will see the people they know at home, buy clothes and take a look at the night life. You might, of course, think they would pass the time for an hour or two with these curiosities around Naples, so easily seen through the English-speaking guides. But this is the travelers' own affair. Some of them have come over merely for the voyage, though they look quite fagged with the life on the ship. Some are merely moving about, not having learned that the only place in the world after all is yourself. No, this is their own affair. The safest department for reflection is what bearing this state of things has on our American culture.

If these people are not interested in the Greeks or in Caesar, or in the Saracen's artistic mind or the strangeness of new and ancient seas and continents, that is all right. Doubtless they have their own world to think about, what art it shall create, what life they shall invent for themselves, what projects, meanings and structures they will see and consider, or will rush past every day. Certainly a good deal of the one-time sightseeing, in our parents' generation and earlier, with its reverence and quotation, was half fake, and not always any too full even of pleasure, the first attribute of traveling. Certainly that sort of culture was often a mere veneer. And when everybody has had the most famous things in the world presented in the movies, as we all have nowadays, there is nothing to tell when you get home. In fact, nobody wants any more to hear anything. Perhaps there are a good many travelers even yet who come to Italy with a different spirit from that of these de luxe passengers. Perhaps those older generations studying something with genuine insight, or with pious reverence at least, these things to be seen in Italy, perfected their taste, their culture, their quality in general; that is their affair. The behavior of my fellow passengers may be a fruitful comment on aspects of our civilization, our mass conceptions, our liberated jazz, our sometimes dazzling new architecture. As to the one remaining puzzle—why this particular boatload of people are traveling—that perhaps is a question not so much cultural as it is sociological, or perhaps psychological, or zoölogical.

STARK YOUNG.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Relief for Strikers

SIR: Before the Senate Committee on Unemployment Mr. Brandt A. Scott of the West Virginia Miners' Federation gave testimony concerning human misery and serfdom which shames America in the eyes of the world. I have in my possession a wage slip of a miner showing how, at the end of two weeks of intermittent work for a coal company, paid mostly in "scrip" (that is, tokens good only in company stores), he owed the company more money than when he began. I have seen miners living in houses not so well built as an ordinary cow shed and have talked with a man dispossessed at night from his shanty, all his chickens let loose and his children's clothes stolen by the dispossessing officers!

The misery is partly the consequence of a sick industry, partly the fault of an incompetent and often cruel industrial autocracy. In both cases it can be helped by social legislation, unemployment insurance and a strong union. Numerous small, short, but heroic strikes are helping to rebuild a union no longer under John L. Lewis' stifling control.

The need of relief in all this is great. The Red Cross is doing little or nothing—nothing in case of strikers against intolerable conditions. The Emergency Committee for Strikers' Relief, 112 East Nineteenth Street, New York City, of which I am chairman, is transmitting relief funds, which I can testify are competently and fairly administered by the miners' own committee. No need in America is greater.

New York City. NORMAN THOMAS.

Tone-deaf Critics

SIR: I am very glad that Mr. Rolfe Humphries has pointed out that the line which your reviewer quoted as an invention of mine, and a delightful invention at that, is unadulterated Ovid. I wrote to one of the editors of The New Republic apprising him of this fact when the review appeared. The piece which dealt with both my prose and my verse volume seemed to have been written by one who had no interest whatever in the work he was criticizing—such reviewers are happily rare in the pages of The New Republic—but who had been told that in my re-shaping of old stories I occasionally turned a happy phrase. Like a tone-deaf man trying to pick out a tune he went out to find such, and we have, "The inventions of his own imagination are often delightful—as, for example, this addition to the Greek myth of the flood"—and then the tag from Ovid. My poems were reviewed in the same manner—with all the expertness of a tone-deaf man giving a musical recital. I know it is not easy to get competent reviews of volumes of poetry. But The New Republic generally manages to do better than in the case under consideration. Witness the thoughtful and expert review of Miss Flanner of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry.

New Canaan, Conn. PADRAIC COLUM.

Methanol Poisoning

SIR: In a recent number of The New Republic reference was made to a report published by the Bureau of Mines concerning synthetic methanol and its use as an anti-freeze compound in motor cars. The Bureau of Mines' investigators stated that there was no evidence of such use causing injury to the health of drivers of motor cars or garage workers. This statement was questioned by The New Republic, which suggested that, inasmuch as the investigation carried on by the Bureau of Mines had been paid for by the producers of synthetic methanol, the results were probably colored to meet the desires of those who paid.

This is really an unjust charge to bring against a group of men who have for years carried on scientific studies of great importance and value and have never shown themselves to be influenced by any outside pressure or persuasion. The experimental tests on animals are made by physicians from the Public Health Service and chemists from the Bureau of Mines, and although in most instances, the governmental bureaus being unable to pay the expenses, money is provided by the interested industries, still the federal scientists preserve their independence and publish what they find, no matter whose interests are involved.

The situation with regard to methanol—wood alcohol—is complicated and obscured by a bitter fight between the producers of synthetic methanol and the distillers of wood alcohol who are competing for the anti-freeze market. The two compounds are the same, their poisonous action is the same. The distillers' anti-freeze is denatured grain alcohol to which crude wood alcohol has been added, and they are therefore insisting that the use of pure methanol is very dangerous, although a few years ago when they sold pure wood alcohol for use as a solvent for shellac they refused to admit its poisonousness. The makers of the synthetic product do not deny that it is a poison, but insist that it can be used quite safely as an anti-freeze. Obviously, the thing to do is to reproduce experimentally conditions in a garage where it is so used and estimate the air contamination and test the effect on animals. This, the Bureau of Mines is doing. In their preliminary report, they stated that there seemed to be no danger in such use and we have no reason to distrust their findings. If further study should show that there is some danger of fumes heavy enough to poison men at work in a garage, we may be sure that we shall learn of it promptly.

It is of the greatest importance that tests should be made of the new chemicals which are continually being adopted by industry, for otherwise the tests will be made on the bodies of workmen instead of laboratory animals. The ideal way would be to have the federal government assume full responsibility for testing all new industrial compounds which may be dangerous to handle, but so long as funds for this are not available, it is surely better to have the industries bear the expense than not to have the work done at all. There is no reason to believe that the men in the Bureau of Mines are less to be trusted than the men in our university laboratories, who, for a long time, have been doing such work for the manufacturers and accepting pay for it. Indeed, only recently a company that wished to have a certain compound tested entrusted the work to the Bureau of Mines rather than to an endowed laboratory, feeling that the former would command more public confidence than the latter, which is known to let industrialists dictate what is to be withheld from publication.

To my mind the serious aspect of the introduction of a cheap form of wood alcohol is that manufacturers may be tempted to use it again as a solvent for coatings, and there is no question that if they do, a serious hazard which we hoped had been abolished for always will return to our workshops. If the producers are wise they will see to it that this does not occur.

Boston, Mass. ALICE HAMILTON, M.D.

Resurgat

SIR: Readers of Stuart Chase's article, "Our School Burns Down," in The New Republic of March 4, will be glad to learn that the Hessian Hills School in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, has been given seven acres of land on which to rebuild. . . . More than that, Howe and Lescaze, the architects of the Oak Lane Day School near Philadelphia, have offered their services free of charge to build the new Hessian Hills School. It begins to look as if when children mourn over the loss of their school, people come to their rescue, knowing that that is a rather unconventional attitude for the young.

More has to be done, however. Twenty thousand dollars has been raised toward the erection of a new plant, but seventy-five thousand dollars is required. Any who wish to show their interest in effective modern education may do so by addressing checks to Mr. Charles Ascher, Treasurer, 18 East Forty-eighth Street, New York City.

Croton-on-Hudson, N. Y. WINTHROP D. LANE.

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Thalia Americana

American Humor: A Study of the National Character, by Constance Rourke. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 324 pages. $3.50.

IT IS A MIGHTY subject, this of American humor: a subject one conceives of as approachable from ever so many unsuspected angles; and it could hardly have fallen, for the moment, into better hands than Miss Rourke's. For one thing, it is not easy to think of many writers capable at once of her industry and of her skill, of her patience in research and her lucidity in exposition: in a word, of her balanced competence. "American Humor" is an erudite book: it is chock full of what are called "materials"; but among a thousand such it is the one book that stands on its own legs, and allows you, in spite of everything, to see the wood as well as the trees. But this is not all, or indeed the best, that one can say of it. Literary competence is one thing, and gifted insight is another; and what chiefly gratifies a reader of Miss Rourke's is her sense of the many dimensions in her subject, the free play of her mind over more than a few of its aspects: particularly, her recognition that the problem must be constantly referred to psychology and constantly posed against a background of social history. Humor not simply as a formal entity, a literary mode, but humor envisaged dynamically as the product of personal needs and social conflicts, the expression of a whole people's ambitions and disappointments and joy in achievement: such is the subject of her book as Miss Rourke apprehends it. The subtitle is modestly definitive.

The whole question, as I say, is an infinitely engaging one. Notoriously, we have been and are—other men than Americans have said we are—a humorous people. A baby, it appears, begins laughing only after many weeks of crying or of impassiveness; and our seventeenth, even our eighteenth, century was in this respect infantile; but once our career of guffawing began it was uninterrupted and, in our own eyes, brilliant. If ever the comic spirit has had free rein, one would say, it has been in America. Yet has it—after all? At any rate, how many reservations, on reflection, one has to make! Granted that Americans have laughed continuously and loud, what kind of laughter has it been? How much of it, for example, has been that "thoughtful laughter" which, according to Meredith's familiar formula, is the basis of true comedy? How much of it has been the rich and heady *Gelächter* of those who, according to Nietzsche, "can at once laugh and be elevated"? Extraordinarily little, perhaps. With all our jolliness, we have had no fine comedy in the theatre, though we have excelled in burlesque; and, unless in the last few years, we have found little place in our letters for genuine satire. The fact of these defaults is of course a commonplace. It has been less observed, perhaps, that with all our popular humorists or polite wits we have had no great humorous literature of the sort in which the sense of the ridiculous, deepened and purified and enriched, becomes the mainspring of what is virtually poetry: no Aristophanes, I mean, no Apuleius, no Chaucer, no Rabelais, no Cervantes, no Gogol. Set beside such writing our best literary humor is either tenuous or brutal, either lacking in body or lacking in tenderness; and, in this light, we seem to have vacillated between the prim and the bitter, between Oliver Wendell Holmes and Ambrose Bierce. Even Mark Twain, unlike those others, distrusted or misunderstood the poet that was in him; and this keeps him from being a true exception to the rule.

To say all this is not to belittle Miss Rourke's subject: on the contrary, it is to make some attempt at suggesting why the subject is so peculiarly fascinating. Without great comedy or great satire, without a Chaucer or a Gogol, we have nevertheless had a constant preoccupation with the ridiculous; and Miss Rourke, of course, has had to pick and choose among the crowding facts with exacting selectiveness. She has also had the wisdom not to burden herself, in a book so descriptive and appreciative, with a thesis; but she hints at one here and there, and she stimulates her reader to grope toward a generalization of his own. For one cannot fail to be struck by the fact that, as Van Wyck Brooks once said, our humor has been a humor not of extraction but of distraction; that, in other words, our laughter has mostly not been a joyful expression of our whole life, but a way of escaping from it or a way of compensating for its disappointments. The humor of evasion (the "tall tale," the burlesque) and the humor of disillusion (sarcasm, cynicism) have been our favorite forms: it is singular how much of American humor has been intensely and sometimes morosely destructive. And this is probably because we have been generally so unsure of ourselves and so unsure of one another, and have had to invent an illusory security. As a people, we have hung together very imperfectly; and only out of rich and integrated sociality does thoughtful laughter, or tender laughter, or elevated laughter, arise. If the irresponsible fantasies of our early comedy "failed to exhibit subtlety, fineness, balance," says Miss Rourke, "they had created laughter and had served the ends of communication among a people unacquainted with themselves, strange to the land, unshaped as a nation; they had produced a shadowy social coherence." A series of abortive attempts at unity, or of compensations for disunity: such appears to be truest aspect of American humor.

This is certainly not the "thesis" of her book, as I have said; but it is because Miss Rourke seems to have some such point of reference in mind that one follows her story with an interest so cumulative. That story falls into two pretty sharply distinguished divisions: in the earlier chapters, Miss Rourke concentrates on the anonymous or quasi-anonymous humor of the American people in the early nineteenth century, on the fate of those broad typical comic inventions—the Yankee, the backwoodsman, the Negro: Jack Downing, Davy Crockett, Jim Crow—which were our earliest experiments at a folk mythology of our own; in the later chapters, she deals rather with American letters in the Golden Day and since, so far as they take humorous form or have even a philosophically comic aspect. I am not sure that the cleavage is a perfectly happy one: certainly one could wish that Miss Rourke had given detailed attention to the less strictly literary, the more democratic and journalistic humor of the decades since the Civil War, as she has done to that of the earlier period—could wish so if only because one is so sure of the acuteness with which she would treat it. Not that the later chapters, too, are not full of beautiful interpretations: one would not care to dispense with the passages on Poe and Whitman, on Henry James and Emily Dickinson; and there is a true sense in which Miss Rourke relates these to the theme of comedy. But I think they are less peculiarly her own than the early chapters: *there* she has evoked almost a complete picture, to the fancy, of our early society, with its laconic peddlers, its heroic hunters and gamecocks and flatboatmen, its darkies and strolling comedians and shanty Irish, its expansiveness and its violence and its color. And she has made it far more than a pleasant picture: she has made it a psychological study

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of a whole society from the point of view of its laughter.

No one who reads the book will fail to be struck by its omissions, and, if they are pointed out, it should not be by way of reproach to Miss Rourke, so much as by way of indicating the unmanageable richness of the subject. I for one could wish that this particular book had been twice as large as it is, so pointed and so pregnant are the interpretations Miss Rourke has in fact found room for. It would be worth a good deal to see what she would make of some of the cracker-box philosophers and lecturers and fashionable funny-men whom, alas, she ignores: I mean Josh Billings, and Eli Perkins, and Bill Nye, and James Whitcomb Riley, and Eugene Field, and Abe Martin. On a larger scale, she could doubtless have found a place for "polite" or genteel humor, the essayists and writers of *vers de société,* who fail to appear: Halleck and Drake and Holmes and Aldrich would certainly have suggested a few significant observations. The omission of both Ambrose Bierce and George Ade seems to me fairly serious. With so much about the early theatre, one would enjoy a parallel chapter on the comic stage, the vaudeville and the "entertainment" since the Civil War. The newspaper humorists of our own generation—B. L. T., F. P. A., Don Marquis, Heywood Broun and Irvin Cobb—are perhaps closer to the heart of the subject than Robinson and Frost and Anderson, whom Miss Rourke deals with instead. There is a true subtlety in her avoiding them, no doubt; and the loss is perhaps less great than the gain: I should protest heatedly only against one final omission, and that is the figure of Mr. Mencken, certainly one of the two or three most accomplished humorists of his decade. But Miss Rourke has made no claim and implied no claim to being encyclopedic, and one feels that there is a reason behind all these silences: as it stands, her book is every way a notable contribution to the history of American culture.

NEWTON ARVIN.

Example to the Young

Wedding Day and Other Stories, by Kay Boyle. New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith. $2.

Plagued by the Nightingale, by Kay Boyle. New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith. $2.50.

MISS KAY BOYLE'S way of thinking and writing stems from sources still new in the sense that they have not been supplanted. She is young enough to regard them as in the category of things past, a sign, I suppose, that she is working in a tradition and not in a school. Gertrude Stein and James Joyce were and are the glories of their time and some very portentous talents have emerged from their shadows. Miss Boyle, one of the newest, I believe to be among the strongest. At present she is identified as one of the Transition group, but these two books just published should put an end to that. What is a group, anyhow? In this one were included—as associate editors and contributors to Transition—many Americans: Harry Crosby, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Matthew Josephson, Isidor Schneider, Josephine Herbst, Murray Godwin, Malcolm Cowley, John Herrman, Laura Riding—how many others?—and Miss Boyle herself. They wrote in every style under heaven and they spent quite a lot of time fighting with each other. Not one but would have resented, and rightly, the notion of discipleship or of interdependence. They were all vigorous not so much in revolt as in assertion, and most of them had admirably subversive ideas. Three magazines sustained them and were sustained by them: Transition, Ernest Walsh's This Quarter and Broom. The tremendous presences of Gertrude Stein and James Joyce were everywhere about them, and so far as Miss Boyle is concerned, it comes to this: that she is a part of the most important literary movement of her time.

She sums up the salient qualities of that movement: a fighting spirit, freshness of feeling, curiosity, the courage of her own attitude and idiom, a violently dedicated search for the meanings and methods of art. In these short stories and this novel there are further positive virtues of the individual temperament: health of mind, wit and the sense of glory. All these are qualities in which the novel marks an advance over the stories, as it does, too, in command of method.

The stories have a range of motive and feeling as wide as the technical virtuosity employed to carry it. Not all of them are successful. In some of the shorter ones, a straining of the emotional situation leads to stridency and incoherence. In others, where this strain is employed as a deliberate device, it is sometimes very successful—as notably in "Vacation Time," an episode in which an obsessional grief distorts and makes tragic a present situation not tragic of itself; the reality is masked by drunkenness, evaded by hysteria, and it is all most beautifully done. "On the Run" is a bitter story of youth in literal flight from death, which gains on it steadily; but the theme deserved better treatment.

In such stories as "Episode in the Life of an Ancestor" and "Uncle Anne," there are the beginnings of objectiveness, a soberer, richer style; and the sense of comedy, which is like acid sometimes, is here gayer and more direct. In "Portrait" and "Polar Bears and Others," Miss Boyle writes of love not as if it were a disease, or a menace, or a soothing syrup to vanity, or something to be peered at through a microscope, or the fruit of original sin, or a battle between the sexes, or a bawdy pastime. She writes as one who believes in love and romance—not the "faded flower in a buttonhole," but love so fresh and clear it comes to the reader almost as a rediscovery in literature. It was high time someone rediscovered it. There are other stories, however—"Spring Morning," "Letters of a Lady," "Episode in the Life of an Ancestor"—in which an adult intelligence plays with destructive humor on the themes of sexual superstition and pretenses between men and women. "Madame Tout Petit," "Summer," "Theme" and "Bitte Nehmen Sie die Blumen" are entirely admirable, each one a subtle feat in unraveling a complicated predicament of the human heart. "Wedding Day," the title story, is the least satisfactory, displaying the weakness of Miss Boyle's strength in a lyricism that is not quite poetry.

The novel, "Plagued by the Nightingale," has the same germinal intensity as the shorter works, but it is sustained from the first word to the last by a sure purpose and a steadier command of resources. The form, structure and theme are comfortably familiar. The freshness and brilliancy lie in the use of the words and the point of view.

It is the history of an American girl married to a young Frenchman, and living for a short period in the provinces with his wealthy bourgeois family. There is Papa, a blustering old fool, though Bridget never says it quite so plainly; Maman, a woman of energy, good will and appalling force of character; three unmarried sisters, Annick, Julie and Marthe; Charlotte the eldest sister, married to her cousin; Pierre the elder brother, a young doctor; and Nicholas, Bridget's husband. A taint in the blood causes

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eccentrics and paralytics to blossom like funeral wreaths in every generation. Nicholas is warned by his weakened legs that the family disease is likely to be the main portion of his inheritance. He is dependent on his people, his wife is dowerless. Charlotte's husband is little better than an imbecile, but he is wealthy. Uncle Robert, a perverse old maid of a man, is also wealthy, and he amuses himself by tampering with family affairs; the victims endure him in the hope that he may give someone money sometime. First and last it is the question of money that agitates the family bosom.

The three younger daughters are waiting, each in her own way, for a proposal of marriage from Luc, an idolized young doctor, who nonchalantly enjoys the privilege of the devoted family without asking to become a member. Bridget is a vigorous personality, with powerful hates and loves, a merciless eye, and a range of prejudices which permits no offense against her secret faiths to be trivial. She has gayety and charm, and at first she is ingenuously fond of this household of persons so closely and tenderly bound, so united in their aims. Nicholas feels quite otherwise. He hates his dear good sweet people who are so warmly kind in small things, so hideously complacent and negligent in the larger essentials. He needs help, restitution really, from this family that has brought him disabled into the world. His father brutally—that is to say, with the utmost fatherly kindness—tells Nicholas that he will give him fifty thousand francs when Bridget has a child. Charlotte's five beautiful children are weak in the legs, but they are "the joy of existence" none the less. One's duty is to procreate for the family, however maimed the lives may be.

Bridget, caught in a whirling undercurrent of love and hatred and family intrigue, begins first to fear and then to despise these strangers as she realizes the ignoble motives back of all the family devotion. She sees her husband gradually growing hostile to her as he identifies her with his family, no longer with himself. She is confirmed in her instinctive distrust of situations and feelings sanctified by the rubber stamps of time and custom; she defends herself by mockery and the mental reservation against the blind cruelties and wrongs which are done under cover of love. Luc complicates matters by falling in love with her instead of asking for one of the sisters, but even so he does not speak until it is too late—until it is safe for him to speak, when marriage to one of the sisters is no longer the best investment he can make. And Bridget, who has wavered, been pulled almost to pieces by the tearing, gnawing, secretive antagonisms and separate aims of the family, comes to her conclusion—a rather bitter one, which in the end will solve very badly the problem. Of her own will she takes to herself the seed of decay.

This is no more than a bare and disfiguring outline of the plan of the novel. The whole manner of the telling is superb: there are long passages of prose which crackle and snap with electric energy, episodes in which inner drama and outward events occur against scenes bright with the vividness of things seen by the immediate eye: the bathing party on the beach, the fire in the village, the delicious all-day excursion to Castle Island, the scene in the market when Bridget and Nicholas quarrel, the death of Charlotte, the funeral. Nothing is misplaced or exaggerated, and the masterful use of symbol and allegory clarify and motivate the main great theme beneath the apparent one: the losing battle of youth and strength against the resistless army of age and death. This concept is implicit in the story itself, and it runs like music between the lines. The book is a magnificent performance; and as the short stories left the impression of reservoirs of power hardly tapped, so this novel, complete as it is, seems only a beginning.

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER.

Miller of The Times

Mr. Miller of The Times: The Story of an Editor, by F. Fraser Bond. New York: Charles Scribner's sons. 264 pages. $3.

BY HERITAGE and temperament Charles R. Miller, for nearly forty years editor of The New York Times, was a Democrat without being a liberal. By association and mental kinship he became a Cleveland Democrat; that is to say, he was what was known later as a "sound" money man, he was a forthright conservative, he was incorrigibly opposed to women's suffrage. By virtue of conservatism, presumably, he persuaded George Jones, then owner of The Times and a rigid Republican, to bolt the party in favor of Grover Cleveland against James G. Blaine.

During Cleveland's second term, Mr. Miller even supported him when the presidential bluster and ill manners almost precipitated war with Great Britain over the Venezuelan boundary. In that international emergency it was Joseph Pulitzer's World which, denying that the Monroe Doctrine was even remotely imperiled, almost single-handedly averted conflict. Mr. Miller on this occasion sided with the jingoists who applauded the President. It was one of two grave blunders—for the verdict of history must account it an error—during his long chieftainship of a great newspaper page; but the second of these was not in the Cleveland tradition.

The second was an editorial, the most discussed editorial Mr. Miller ever wrote, printed on September 16, 1918, advocating peace without victory when overtures were made by Austria-Hungary. No man today need blush to have written a phrase or a word of it, nor need any man be ashamed of its spirit, and yet it swamped the journal in a flood of execration. Mr. Miller did not realize, any more than Woodrow Wilson realized at Paris, that the passions which had been unleashed by wartime propaganda would make such an utterance semi-treasonable in the view of a bloodthirsty and vengeful audience. The paper was accused of having fallen victim to German gold, readers fell off by the thousands, the health of Adolph S. Ochs, the principal owner, was almost wrecked, and competitors shamelessly made capital of the contretemps. The Times weathered the storm, nor did the high regard of his associates for Mr. Miller abate, but the incident illustrated the narrow margin by which a great editor skirts the edge of banishment and peril.

When Mr. Ochs was asked once by a visitor what would happen if an editorial writer were to disagree with his opinions, he was astonished. "But," he retorted, "that couldn't happen." F. Fraser Bond, author of this biography, understands perfectly such a situation. "The Times," he says, "as a consistently conservative daily, would hardly attract to its staff the rabid radical. Mr. Miller could feel assured as he sat at the conference table that his associates saw the world of affairs in much the same general way as he surveyed it himself." He was always able, moreover, to command their respect, admiration and affection. Although expelled from school and from Dartmouth, he had educated himself by omnivorous

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reading and deep contemplation, until he brought to New York journalism a cultural background probably equaled by no other editor save Charles A. Dana; he spoke five languages, and at sixty-eight learned Russian in addition; he almost undismalized the dismal science; he had a command of American politics and of European diplomacy surpassed by no other commentator of his day; he was versed in the law of nations and the law of his own land; and, though he dictated much of his work, he was master of a prose style rising frequently to genuine distinction.

Mr. Bond, who writes this biography, has gathered a praiseworthy wealth of anecdotal and factual detail. He was for a time Mr. Miller's secretary and editorial associate, and he serves now with the Pulitzer School of Journalism, for which Mr. Miller was a member of the first Board of Advisers. The biography thus deals with the life of a newspaper, as well as with the life of a man who, until he died, was virtually unknown to the public. It is friendly without being fulsome; informed though uncritical; and those who realize the influence for betterment exercised by Mr. Miller over the editorial pages of newspapers will feel that it is a memorial well merited.

SILAS BENT.

Industry and the Negro

Racial Factors in American Industry, by Herman Feldman. New York: Harper and Brothers. 318 pages. $4.

The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement, by Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris. New York: Columbia University Press. 509 pages. $4.50.

A FEW YEARS ago André Siegfried, in "America Comes of Age," made a sweeping indictment of the United States, accusing it of paralleling a highly specialized industrial system with a racial hierarchy of employment wholly suggestive of the Middle Ages. Additional credence is given Professor Siegfried's accusation in these two studies of the unscientific policies and practices of our highly scientific industries. These books, moreover, are timely. With the American Order of Black Shirts advocating the replacement of black workers with white ones; with relief agencies finding it increasingly more difficult to procure work for minority racial groups during the Hoover era; with unemployed black workers in New York hoping for the permanency of relief employment, since it gives them more security than they possess during normal periods; with Greek competing against Jew in the fur industry, Negro against Irish in the longshore occupations, Syrian against white and Negro in the dried-fruit industry, Jew against Gentile in the commercial fields, Mexican against Negro in the bituminous coal mines, Filipinos against Negroes in the pullman service, and native white workers enjoying a virtual monopoly in certain occupations, the racial struggle is growing more intense from year to year.

Having collected a mass of apparently unrelated data on the subject, Dr. Feldman has welded it into a volume of singular importance, one that gives the reader the sociologist's and social psychologist's interpretation of a complex problem in industrial management. The responsibility for racial disharmonies in industry, however, is not that of management alone. Two groups of attitudes are responsible—first, that of the employer and his representatives; second, that of the community at large. Because these attitudes govern the employment and non-employment of all workers, and operate to the particular disadvantage of Negro, Oriental, Mexican, Indian, Italian, Slav and Jew, industrial management is called upon to think the whole problem anew. We need a new set of industrial relationships which will be to the advantage of all concerned. Toward this end, the author suggests a remedial program, one which emphasizes the necessity of changing our traditional thinking, of revamping the attitudes both of management and of the community. Thus, his proposed solution lies not so much in the field of economics as in that of social diagnosis and treatment.

Many students of labor conditions will, of course, disagree with Dr. Feldman's remedial plans. Abram Harris and Sterling Spero, authors of "The Black Worker," may be placed in the front rank of the dissenters. Their analysis of the Negro proletariat (described by Dr. Feldman as a group whose progress raises problems rather than settles them) is an economic one. Their book is not a "good-will tract in race relations," and does not "offer a solution for a vexing problem." Its thesis is that the role now played by the Negro worker in American industry is influenced by four basic factors: first, the omnipresent heritage of slavery, which has made him the "last to be hired and the first to be fired" in industry; second, the class structure of labor organizations, which denies the Negro opportunities for employment in some fields and for promotion, acquisition of skill, and higher wages in others; third, the change in his status from a labor reserve to an integral part of the labor force in nearly all of the country's basic industries; and fourth, the rise of a Negro middle class and the consequent spread of middle-class ideals throughout the Negro community.

"The Black Worker" is a careful and studied approach to the Negro's role in the history of American labor. It offers a penetrating analysis of the policies and practices of the American Federation of Labor and the autonomous international unions within and without the Federation. It shows most clearly how those organizations, with a craft-conscious and race-conscious complacency, have misread the trends in American industry. In fact, "no obstacle has been greater than the narrow and exclusive craft structure and opportunistic philosophy of American trade unionism. . . . For three hundred years the Negro has been kept in a position of social and economic inferiority, and white organized labor, dominated by the hierarchy of the skilled crafts, has no desire to see him emerge from that condition."

These conclusions are based on detailed discussions of the problems faced by Negro longshoremen, coal miners, steel workers, stockyard and railroad employees and pullman porters. We are told how these workers, struggling against seemingly insurmountable odds, established protest unions of their own, frail and ineffective though they were. Nothing in the volume shows more penetrating thought and provides more interesting reading than the chapter on the union of pullman porters, whose fight for recognition so caught the fancy of the American public five years ago.

Dr. Spero and Dr. Harris, as economists, are not so certain of a solution to the problems of Negro workers in industrial life. They reason: Can it be done through working-class unity? Hardly. The white worker is prejudiced and balks at the threat of social equality. Will the introduction of machinery help? To some extent, but all personnel will then be reduced and that which remains will be the organized element which does not include Negroes. Will the panacea be found in industrial stabilization, through the elimination of the competitive factors in industry? That would require an extension of governmental control achieved only through political action of a

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type in which the Negro, with his subservience to political machines, seems especially unlikely to participate. Well, will the growth of labor consciousness among Negroes produce the desired results? In part. But when that consciousness ripens, there will be intra-racial strife between the black proletariat and the black petty bourgeoisie. Even if the Negro should approve of a new industrial and political alignment, such a transition would not be sufficient to change the black workers' status, for an "outcast minority group" is powerless.

In other words, there is very little hope for the masses of black workers, since their leaders and their movements, both the conciliatory and the militant, are decidedly middle-class, opportunistic and individualistic in their outlook. Only when it becomes the will of the controlling white majority that this situation should change will a new alignment be effected. If this does not happen, the black worker might well curse Ham and die. IRA DE A. REID.

Book Notes

BELLES LETTRES

THE EIGHTEEN-EIGHTIES, edited by Walter de la Mare. *New York: The Macmillan Company. 271 pages. $4.50.*

Under the editorship of Walter de la Mare—who is further represented by an essay on Lewis Carroll—G. K. Chesterton, Granville-Barker and others estimate the literary endeavors of the English 1880's. Owen Meredith, who wrote the amazing couplets of "Lucile" in deadly earnest, is quoted and described by his son, the present Earl of Lytton; the letter written by the elder Earl to his son is probably the only and the ultimate justification of the Edgar Guest stripe of versifier. T. S. Eliot digressively estimates Pater's place, but has more to say about Arnold and the manner of thought that confused Arnold's mind. As usual, some of Mr. Eliot's remarks are perspicacious, and accurate. The most interesting essay is contributed by Granville-Barker on Ibsen's advent into the stuffy contemporary theatre of England; it is interesting as a deadly parallel to the state of our own theatre today.

LEIGH HUNT'S "EXAMINER" EXAMINED, 1808-1825, by Edmund Blunden. *New York: Harper and Brothers. 263 pages. $4.*

The poet Edmund Blunden writes a year-by-year analysis of the files of The Examiner during Leigh Hunt's editorship. He also reprints thirteen articles written by Hunt in praise and defense of Keats and Shelley, and some fragments which, from internal evidence, he ascribes to Lamb.

PLAYS OF THE RESTORATION AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, edited by Dougald MacMillan and Howard Mumford Jones. *New York: Henry Holt and Company. 896 pages. $4.*

Twenty-four plays, of which eleven date from the Restoration and thirteen from the following century, are here reprinted for college students and general readers. The notes are informative and brief; as for the text, it is that of the first edition, with spelling and punctuation modernized. The dramatists included range from those whose importance is purely historical—Davenant, Home, George Lillo—to those like Congreve and Sheridan whose work is acted and read with pleasure today. Wycherley is the most important of those omitted—can it be though propriety? And if questions of propriety are once allowed to enter, why treat Restoration comedies at all?

POETRY AND THE CRITICISM OF LIFE, by H. W. Garrod. *Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 168 pages. $2.*

This book contains eight lectures delivered by an English classical scholar while professor of Poetry at Harvard. He discusses Arnold, Emerson, Clough and "The Testament of Beauty." In the first and last lectures he says that good poetry teaches virtue, complains that modern poetry lacks "Magnificence of Mind" and maintains that a critic should not be afraid of indulging his personal tastes. Mr. Garrod writes with great wit and elegance, and his criticisms of individual poets are acute; but he belongs completely to the genteel tradition of Oxford and Boston; he says nothing to interest those who dislike its graceful sterility.

BIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIRS

THE INCREDIBLE YANQUI: The Career of Lee Christmas, by Hermann B. Deutsch. *New York: Longmans Green and Company. 242 pages. $3.50.*

The adventurous, alcoholic and uninhibited life of Lee Christmas, American soldier of fortune in Honduras. Besides its interest to the general reader, the book has some importance to students of our foreign policy, because of its details concerning the Bonilla-Christmas revolution (1911), organized in New Orleans with the aid of American finance. In order to protect himself against this revolt, President Davila agreed to Knox's treaty establishing American financial control. The Honduran Congress, however, declined to accept the treaty and Davila was forced to resign.

WORDSWORTH, by C. H. Herford. *New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. 255 pages. $2.*

An English scholar summarizes Wordsworth's life and psychological development, with illustrations from the poems and especially from the earliest version of "The Prelude." Half the book deals with the period before 1798, and the last forty years are disposed of in as many pages. There are no new facts or interpretations, and the change in Wordsworth's political opinions is inadequately explained; but the literary criticism is penetrating and the style delightful. All future students of Wordsworth will find this a useful handbook.

THE WORLD CRISIS, by Winston S. Churchill. *New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 866 pages. $5.*

The four volumes of Mr. Churchill's war memoirs, covering the period from 1911 to 1918, are here reprinted in one volume. Although the original account has been recast to form a continuous narrative and to eliminate overlappings between individual volumes, the only actual changes made are those which the author considers to be warranted by increased historical knowledge, and are of minor significance. The text is supplemented with maps, plans, a table of war casualties and an index.

HISTORY

THE CAMBRIDGE ANCIENT HISTORY, Vol. VIII, edited by S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock and M. P. Charlesworth. *New York: The Macmillan Company. 840 pages. $10.50.*

It is fortunate that so many of the authorities in the field of ancient history write well. Good writing is an important element in the usefulness of even a reference work, and adds greatly to the efficiency of a historical series which is one of the outstanding achievements of contemporary scholarship. The Cambridge Ancient History has, considering its scope, remarkably few desert areas of pedantry. Every one of the large volumes is readable, and many of the contributions are brilliant. The latest volume, the eighth, carries the record on for the eighty-five years which saw the Second Punic War, the subjugation of the Hellenistic monarchies, the defeat of the Greek Leagues, the destruction of Carthage and the establishment of Roman supremacy over the entire Mediterranean world. It includes valuable chapters on the literature, art, economics and social tendencies of the period, and fulfills the broad interpretation of history of the late J. B. Bury, under whose editorship the work was begun.

THE CAMBRIDGE ANCIENT HISTORY, Volume III of Plates, prepared by C. T. Seltman. *New York: The Macmillan Company. 212 pages, with 98 full-page plates. $3.75.*

This volume of plates illustrates volumes VII and VIII of the Cambridge Ancient History. The arts of the Hellenistic age are chiefly represented, but Celtic, Iberian, Thracian, Carthaginian and Black Sea products are illustrated also.

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EUROPE AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, by Donaldson Jordan and Edwin J. Pratt. *Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 300 pages. $4.*

Had England or France recognized the Confederacy, the South might have won. Both nations leaned in that direction, resenting the blockade which created a cotton famine. The Union alienated sympathy by the high-handed jailing of dissenters and by coercing the press. The Trent affair insulted England, brought us close to war with her. But Northern military successes and Lincoln's emancipation policy won public opinion abroad, and by 1863 no European government dared recognize the South. The course of foreign opinion during these crucial years is effectively illuminated in the present study.

Fiction

MORNING TIDE, by Neil M. Gunn. *New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. $2.50.*

This novel dealing with the life of a family in a fishing village in Scotland as it touches the twelve-year-old son, is so simply and persuasively written that one is almost unaware of the clichés of the story. Neil Gunn's imagination is obviously of the type that concentrates on writing in detail, on background, on purely pictorial description, at the expense of character and situation: thus, a large part of the information given on the characters of "Morning Tide" is limited to descriptions of their appearance. The complications that are created—the love of Hugh's sisters for the same man, for example—seems to fade away, leaving no traces. This might be taken to indicate Hugh's capacity for forgetfulness, but its effect is to break the book into a series of episodes—all of them told, however, with a fresh, early-morning lyricism. "Morning Tide" would be a more satisfactory novel if events did not work out so happily, or if some skepticism could enliven the affectionate glow that surrounds all the characters.

Contributors

John T. Flynn, the author of "Investment Trusts Gone Wrong" and a contributor to the recent symposium "Behold America!" is at present traveling through Europe. Before he returns he is planning to interview the ex-Kaiser for a popular magazine in this country.

Leslie Nelson Jennings has contributed verse to The Conning Tower and various magazines. He is now living in California.

Lytton Strachey, whose "Eminent Victorians" and "Queen Victoria" immediately placed him in the front ranks of English biographers, has completed a collection of essays, "Portraits in Miniature," which Harcourt, Brace is to publish this coming autumn.

Newton Arvin is assistant professor of English at Smith College. He is the author of "Hawthorne," published last year by Little, Brown, and the compiler and editor of "The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals."

Katherine Anne Porter, who was recently awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, was born in Louisiana and educated in a Catholic convent. She received her literary training as a reporter on newspapers in Denver and elsewhere. She has spent much of her time in Mexico, and was there during the crucial years of the revolution. Her volume of short stories, "Flowering Judas," was recently published by Harcourt, Brace. She is now completing a novel.

Silas Bent, the well known journalist, is the author of "Ballyhoo," "Strange Bedfellows" and "Machine-Made Man."

Ira De A. Reid is director of research for the National Urban League. He is the author of an extensive series of social studies on the Negro, one of the more recent being "The Negro's Relation to Crime," which he prepared for the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement.

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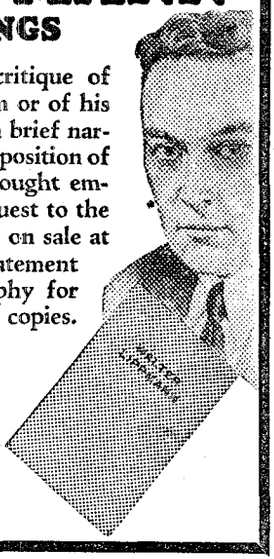
HIS CAREER AND WRITINGS



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